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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

VOL. II.


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ROBERT BROWNING,

ROME 1854.

From an Oil Painting by W. Fisher

THE LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

EDITED WITH BIOGRAPHICAL ADDITIONS

BY

FREDERIC G. KENYON

WITH PORTRAITS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II

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THE LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CHAPTER VII

1851–1852

SINCE they first settled in Florence the Brownings had made no long or distant expeditions from their new home. Their summer excursions to Vallombrosa, Lucca, or Siena had been of the nature of short holidays, and had not taken them beyond the limits of Tuscany. Now they had planned a far wider series of travels, which, beginning with Rome, Naples, Venice, and Milan, should then be extended across the Alps, and comprehend Brussels, Paris, and ultimately London. This ambitious programme had to be curtailed by the omission of the southern tour to Rome and Naples, as well as the digression to Brussels, but the rest of the scheme was carried out, and about the beginning of June they left Casa Guidi for an absence which extended over seventeen months.

The holiday had been well earned, especially by Mrs. Browning, who, since the preparation of the new edition of her poems in the previous year, had been writing the second part of 'Casa Guidi Windows.' It is probably to this poem that she refers in the letter to Miss Browning printed

at the end of the last chapter, Miss Browning having on more than one occasion helped both her brother and her sister-in-law in the task of passing their poems through the press. The book appeared in June, just as they were starting on their travels, and probably for this reason we hear less in the letters of its reception. It was hardly to be expected that the English public would take a very keen interest in a poem dealing almost entirely with Italian politics, and half of it with the politics of three years ago. Either in 1849 or in 1859 the interest would have been livelier; but Italy was passing now through the valley of the shadow, and, save for the horrors of the Neapolitan prisons, was not much before the public for the moment. The intrigues of Louis Napoleon and the ostentatious aggression of the Pope in England were the matters of most interest in foreign politics, and both were overshadowed by the absorbing topic of the Great Exhibition.

Another reason why 'Casa Guidi Windows' has received less appreciation than it deserves, both at the time of its publication and since, is that it stands rather apart from all the recognised species of poetry, and is hard to classify and criticise. Its political and contemporary character cut it off from the imaginative and historical subjects which form in general the matter of poetry, while its genuinely poetic emotion and language separate it from the political pamphlet or the occasional verse. It is a poetic treatment of a political subject raised to a high level by the genuine enthusiasm and fire with which it is inspired, and these give it a value which lasts far beyond the moment of the events which gave it birth. The execution, too, shows an advance on most of Mrs. Browning's previous work. The dangerous experiments in rhyming which characterised many of the poems in the volumes of 1844 are abandoned; the licences of language are less frequent; the verse runs smoothly and is more uniformly under command. It would appear as if the heat of inspiration which produced the

'Sonnets from the Portuguese' had left a permanent and purifying effect upon her style. The poem has been neglected by those who take little interest in Italy and its history, and adversely criticised by those who do not sympathise with its political and religious opinions; but with those who look only to its poetry and to its warm-hearted championship of a great cause, it will always hold a high place of its own among Mrs. Browning's writings.

To Miss I. Blagden

Florence: May 1, [1851].

I am writing to you, dearest Miss Blagden, at last, you see; though you must have excommunicated me before now as the most ungrateful of correspondents and friends. Do forgive what you can — and your kindness is so great that I believe you can, and shall go on to write as if you did. We have been in the extremity of confusion and indecision. Remember how the fairy princes used to do when they arrived at the meeting of three roads, and had to consider what choice to make. How they used to shake their heads and ponder, and end sometimes by drawing lots! Much in the like perplexity have we been. Everything was ready for Rome — the day fixed, the packing begun, the vettura bargained for. Suddenly, visions of obstacles rose up. We were late in the season. We should be late for the festas. May would be hot in Rome for Wiedeman. Then two journeys, north and south, to Rome and Naples, besides Paris and England, pulled fearfully at the purse-strings. Plainly we couldn't afford it. So everything was stopped and changed. We gave up Rome and you, and are now actually on the point of setting out for Venice; Venice is to console us for Rome. We go to-morrow, indeed. The plan is to stay a fortnight at Venice (or more or less, as the charm works), and then to strike across to Milan; across the

Splügen into Switzerland, and to linger there among the hills and lakes for a part of the summer, so working out an intention of economy; then down the Rhine; then by railroad to Brussels; so to Paris, settling there; after which we pay our visit to England for a few weeks. Early next spring we mean to go to Rome and return here, either *for good* (which is very possible) or for the purpose of arranging our house affairs and packing up books and furniture. As it is, we have our apartment for another year, and shall let it if we can. It has been painted, cleaned, and improved in all ways, till my head and Robert's ring again with the confusion of it all. Oh that we were gone, since we are to go! When out of sight of Florence, we shall begin to enjoy, I hope, the sight of other things, but as it is the impression is only painful and dizzying. Our friends Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvy go with us as far as Venice, and then leave us on a direct course for England, having committed their children and nurses to the care of her sister at the Baths of Lucca meantime. We take with us only Wilson.

Do write to me at Venice, Poste Restante, that I may know you are thinking of me and excusing me kindly. If you knew how uncertain and tormented we have been. I won't even ask Robert to add a line to this, he is so overwhelmed with a flood of businesses; but he bids me speak to you of him as affectionately and faithfully (because affectionately) as I have reason to do. So kind it was in you to think of taking the trouble of finding us an apartment! So really sensible we are to all your warm-hearted goodness, with fullness of heart on our side too. And, after all, we are not parting! Either we shall find you in Italy again, or you will find us in Paris. I have a presentimental assurance of finding one another again before long. Remember us and love us meantime.

As to your spiritual visitor — why, it would be hard to make out a system of Romish doctrine from the most

Romish version of the S.S.[1] The differences between the Protestant version and the Papistical are not certainly justifiable by the Greek original, on the side of the latter. In fact, the Papistical version does not pretend to follow the Greek text, but a Latin translation of the same — it's a translation from a translation. Granting it, however, to be faithful, I must repeat that to make out the Romish system from even *such* a Romish version could not be achieved. So little does Scripture (however represented) seem to me to justify that system of ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline. I answer your question because you bid me, but I am not a bit frightened at the idea of your becoming a R.C., however you may try to frighten me. You have too much intelligence and uprightness of intellect. We do hope you have enjoyed Rome, and that dearest Miss Agassiz (give our kind love to her) is better and looks better than we all thought her a little while ago. I have a book coming out in England called 'Casa Guidi Windows,' which will prevent everybody else (except you) from speaking to me again. Do love me always, as I shall you. Forgive me, and *don't* forget me. I shall try, after a space of calm, to behave better to you, and more after my *heart* — for I am ever (as Robert is)

Your faithfully affectionate friend,

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

To Miss Mitford

Venice: June 4, [1851].

My ever dearest Miss Mitford, — I must write to you from Venice, though it can only be a few lines. So much I have to say and *feel* in writing to you, and thinking that you were not well when you wrote last to me, I long to hear from you — and yet I can't tell you to-day where a

[1] The Holy Scriptures.

letter will find me. We are wanderers on the face of the world just now, and with every desire of going straight from Venice to Milan to-morrow (Friday) week, we shall more probably, at the Baths of Recoaro, be lingering and lingering. Therefore will you write to the care of Miss Browning, New Cross, Hatcham, near London? for so I shall not lose your letter. I have been between heaven and earth since our arrival at Venice. The heaven of it is ineffable. Never had I touched the skirts of so celestial a place. The beauty of the architecture, the silver trails of water up between all that gorgeous colour and carving, the enchanting silence, the moonlight, the music, the gondolas — I mix it all up together, and maintain that nothing is like it, nothing equal to it, not a second Venice in the world. Do you know, when I came first I felt as if I never could go away. But now comes the earth side. Robert, after sharing the ecstasy, grows uncomfortable, and nervous, and unable to eat or sleep; and poor Wilson, still worse, in a miserable condition of continual sickness and headache. Alas for these mortal Venices — so exquisite and so bilious! Therefore I am constrained away from my joys by sympathy, and am forced to be glad that we are going off on Friday. For myself, it does not affect me at all. I like these moist, soft, relaxing climates; even the scirocco doesn't touch me much. And the baby grows gloriously fatter in spite of everything.

No, indeed and indeed, we are not going to England for the sake of the Exposition. How could you fancy such a thing, even once? In any case we shall not reach London till late, and if by any arrangement I could see my sister Arabel in France or on the coast of England, we would persuade Robert's family to meet us there, and not see London at all. Ah, if you knew how abhorrent the thought of England is to *me!* Well, we must not talk of it. My eyes shut suddenly when my thoughts go that way.

Tell me exactly how you are. I heartily rejoice that you

have decided at last about the other house, so as to avoid the danger of another autumn and winter in the damp. Do you write still for Mr. Chorley's periodical, and how does it go on? Here in Italy the fame of it does not penetrate. As for Venice, you can't get even a 'Times,' much less an 'Athenæum.' We comfort ourselves by taking a box at the opera (the whole box on the ground tier, mind) for two shillings and eightpence English. Also, every evening at half-past eight, Robert and I are sitting under the moon in the great piazza of St. Mark, taking excellent coffee and reading the French papers. Can you fancy me so?

You will receive a copy of my new poem, 'Casa Guidi Windows,' soon after this note. I have asked Sarianna Browning to see that you receive it safely. I don't give away copies (having none to give away, according to booksellers' terms), but I can't let you receive my little book from another hand than the writer's. Tell me how you like the poem — honestly, truly — which numbers of people will be sure to dislike profoundly and angrily, perhaps. We think of going to Recoaro because Mr. Chorley praised it to us years ago. Tell him so if you write.

Here are a heap of words tossed down upon paper. I can't put the stops even. Do write *about yourself*, not waiting for the book.

Your ever attached

E. B. B.

At Paris how near we shall be! How sure to meet. Have you been to the Exposition yourself? Tell me. And what is the general feeling *now?*

To John Kenyon

Paris: July 7, [1851].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — I have waited day after day during this week that we have been here, to be able to tell you that we have decided this or that — but the indecision

lasts, and I can't let you hear from others of our being in Paris when you have a right more than anybody almost to hear all about us. I wanted to write to you, indeed, from Venice, where we stayed a month, and much the same reason made me leave it undone, as we were making and unmaking plans the whole time, and we didn't know till the last few hours, for instance, whether or not we should go to Milan. Venice is quite exquisite; it wrapt me round with a spell at first sight, and I longed to live and die there —never to go away. The gondolas, and the glory they swim through, and the silence of the population, drifted over one's head across the bridges, and the fantastic architecture and the coffee-drinking and music in the Piazza San Marco, everything fitted into my lazy, idle nature and weakness of body, as if I had been born to the manner of it and to no other. Do you know I expected in Venice a dreary sort of desolation? Whereas there was nothing melancholy at all, only a soothing, lulling, rocking atmosphere which if Armida had lived in a city rather than in a garden would have suited her purpose. Indeed Taglioni seems to be resting her feet from dancing, there, with a peculiar zest, inasmuch as she has bought three or four of the most beautiful palaces. How could she do better? And one or two ex-kings and queens (of the more vulgar royalties) have wrapt themselves round with those shining waters to forget the purple — or dream of it, as the case may be. Robert and I led a true Venetian life, I assure you; we 'swam in gondolas' to the Lido and everywhere else, we went to a festa at Chioggia in the steamer (frightening Wilson by being kept out by the wind till two o'clock in the morning), we went to the opera and the play (at a shilling each, or not as much !), and we took coffee every evening on St. Mark's Piazza to music and the stars. Altogether it would have been perfect, only what's perfect in the world? While I grew fat, Wilson grew thin, and Robert could not sleep at nights. The air was too relaxing or soft or something for them both, and

poor Wilson declares that another month of Venice would have killed her outright. Certainly she looked dreadfully ill and could eat nothing. So I was forced to be glad to go away, out of pure humanity and sympathy, though I keep saying softly to myself ever since, 'What is there on earth like Venice?'

Then, we slept at Padua on St. Anthony's night (more's the pity for us: they made us pay sixteen zwanzigers for it!), and Robert and I, leaving Wiedeman at the inn, took a calèche and drove over to Arqua, which I had set my heart on seeing for Petrarch's sake. Did you ever see it, *you?* And didn't it move you, the sight of that little room where the great soul exhaled itself? Even Robert's man's eyes had tears in them as we stood there, and looked through the window at the green-peaked hills. And, do you know, I believe in 'the cat.'

Through Brescia we passed by moonlight (such a flood of white moonlight) and got into Milan in the morning. There we stayed two days, and I climbed to the topmost pinnacle of the cathedral; wonder at me! Indeed I was rather overtired, it must be confessed — three hundred and fifty steps — but the sight was worth everything, enough to light up one's memory for ever. How glorious that cathedral is! worthy almost of standing face to face with the snow Alps; and itself a sort of snow dream by an artist architect, taken asleep in a glacier! Then the Da Vinci Christ did not disappoint us, which is saying much. It is divine. And the Lombard school generally was delightful after Bologna and those soulless Caracci! I have even given up Guido, and Guercino too, since knowing more of them. Correggio, on the other hand, is sublime at Parma; he is wonderful! besides having the sense to make his little Christs and angels after the very likeness of my baby.

From Milan we moved to Como, steamed down to Menaggio (opposite to Bellaggio), took a calèche to Porlezza,

and a boat to Lugano, another calèche to Bellinzona, left Wiedeman there, and, returning on our steps, steamed down and up again the Lago Maggiore, went from Bellinzona to Faido and slept, and crossed the Mount St. Gothard the next day, catching the Lucerne steamer at Fluellen. The scenery everywhere was most exquisite, but of the great *pass* I shall say nothing — it was like standing in the presence of God when He is terrible. The tears overflowed my eyes. I think I never *saw* the sublime before. Do you know I sate out in the coupé a part of the way with Robert so as to apprehend the whole sight better, with a thick shawl over my head, only letting out the eyes to see. They told us there was more snow than is customary at this time of year, and it well might be so, for the passage through it, cut for the carriage, left the snow-walls nodding over us at a great height on each side, and the cold was intense.

Do you know we might yield the palm, and that Lucerne is far finer than any of our Italian lakes? Even Robert had to confess it at once. I wanted to stay in Switzerland, but we found it wiser to hasten our steps and come to Paris; so we came. Yes, and we travelled from Strasburg to Paris in four-and-twenty hours, night and day, never stopping except for a quarter of an hour's breakfast and half an hour's dinner. So afraid I was of the fatigue for Wiedeman! But between the unfinished railroad and the diligence, there's a complication of risks of losing places just now, and we were forced to go the whole way in a breath or to hazard being three or four days on the road. So we took the coupé and resigned ourselves, and poor little babe slept at night and laughed in the day, and came into Paris as fresh in spirit as if just alighted from the morning star, screaming out with delight at the shops! Think of that child! Upon the whole he has enjoyed our journey as much as any one of us, observing and admiring; though Robert and Wilson will have it that some of his admiration of the *scenery* we passed through was pure

affectation and acted out to copy ours. He cried out, clasping his hands, that the mountains were 'due' — meaning a great number. His love of beautiful buildings, of churches especially, no one can doubt about. When first he saw St. Mark's, he threw up his arms in wonder, and then, clasping them round Wilson's neck (she was carrying him), he kissed her in an ecstasy of joy. And that was after a long day's journey, when most other children would have been tired and fretful. But the sense of the beautiful is certainly very strong in him, little darling. He can't say the word 'church' yet, but when he sees one he begins to chant. Oh, he's a true Florentine in some things.

Well, now we are in Paris and have to forget the 'belle chiese;' we have beautiful shops instead, false teeth grinning at the corners of the streets, and disreputable prints, and fascinating hats and caps, and brilliant restaurants, and M. le Président in a cocked hat and with a train of cavalry, passing like a rocket along the boulevards to an occasional yell from the Red. Oh yes, and don't mistake me! for I like it all extremely, it's a splendid city — a city in the country, as Venice is a city in the sea. And I'm as much amused as Wiedeman, who stands in the street before the printshops (to Wilson's great discomfort) and roars at the lions. And I admire the bright green trees and gardens everywhere in the heart of the town. Surely it is a most beautiful city! And I like the restaurants more than is reasonable; dining *à la carte*, and mixing up one's dinner with heaps of newspapers, and the 'solution' by Emile de Girardin, who suggests that the next President should be a tailor. Moreover we find apartments very cheap in comparison to what we feared, and we are in a comfortable quiet hotel, where it is possible, and not ruinous, to wait and look about one.

As to England — oh England — how I dread to think of it. We talk of going over for a short time, but have not decided when; yet it will be soon perhaps — it may. If

it were not for my precious Arabel, I would not go; because Robert's family would come to him here, they say. But to give up Arabel is impossible. Henrietta is in Somersetshire; it is uncertain whether I shall see her, even in going, and she too might come to Paris this winter. And you will come — you promised, I think? . . .

I feel here *near enough* to England, that's the truth. I recoil from the bitterness of being nearer. Still, it must be thought of.

Dearest cousin, dearest friend, in all this pleasant journey we have borne you in mind, and gratefully! You must feel *that* without being told. I won't quite do like my Wiedeman, who every time he fires his gun (if it's twenty times in five minutes) says 'Papa, papa,' because Robert gave him the gun, and the gratitude is as re-iterantly and loudly explosive. But one's thoughts may say what they please and as often as they please.

Arabel tells me you are kind to the manner of my poem, though to the matter obdurate. Miss Mitford, too, says that it won't receive the sympathy proper to a home subject, because the English people don't care anything for the Italians now; despising them for their want of originality in *Art!* That's very good of the English people, really! I fear much that dear Miss Mitford has suffered seriously from the effects of the damp house last winter. What she says of herself makes me anxious about her.

Give my true love to dear Miss Bayley, and say how I repent in ashes for not having written to her. But she is large-hearted and will forgive me, and I shall make amends and send her sheet upon sheet. Barry Cornwall's letter to Robert, of course, delighted as well as honoured me. Does it appear in the new edition of his 'songs' &c.?

Mind, if ever I go to England I shall have no heart to go out of a very dark corner. I shall just see you and that's all. It's only Robert who is a patriot now, of us two. England, what with the past and present, is a place of

bitterness to me, bitter enough to turn all her seas round to wormwood! Airs and hearts, all are against me in England; yet don't let me be ungrateful. No love is forgotten or less prized, certainly not yours. Only I'm a citizeness of the world now, you see, and float loose.

God bless you, dearest Mr. Kenyon, prays

Your ever affectionate

BA.

Robert's best love as always. He writes by this post to Mr. Procter. How beautifully Sarianna has corrected for the press my new poem! Wonderfully well, really. There is only one error of consequence, which I will ask you to correct in any copy you can — of 'rail' *in the last line*, to 'vail;' the allusion being of course to the Jewish temple — but as it is printed nobody can catch any meaning, I fear. They tell me that the Puseyite organ, the 'Guardian,' has been strong in attack. So best.

After a few weeks in Paris the travellers crossed over to England, which they had not seen for nearly five years. Their visit to London lasted about two months, from the end of July to the end of September, during which time they stayed in lodgings at 26 Devonshire Street.

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Wednesday, [about August 1851].

My ever dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am not ungrateful after all, but I wanted to write a long letter to you (having much to say), and even now it is hard in this confusion to write a short one. We have been overwhelmed with kindnesses, crushed with gifts, like the Roman lady; and literally to drink through a cup of tea from beginning to end without an interruption from the door-bell, we have scarcely attained to since we came. For my part I refuse all dinner invitations except when our dear friend Mr. Kenyon 'imposes

himself as an exception,' in his own words. But even in keeping the resolution there are necessary fatigues; and, do you know, I have not been well since our arrival in England. My first step ashore was into a puddle and a fog, and I began to cough before we reached London. The quality of the air does *not* agree with me, that's evident. For nearly five years I have had no such cough nor difficulty of breathing, and my friends, who at first sight thought me looking well, must forbear all compliments for the future, I think, I get so much paler every day. Next week we send Wilson to see her mother near Sheffield and *the baby with her*, which is a great stroke of fortitude in me; only what I can't bear is to see him crying because she is gone away. So we resolve on letting them both go together. When she returns, ten days or a fortnight after, we shall have to think of going to Paris again; indeed Robert begins to be nervous about me — which is nonsense, but natural enough perhaps.

In regard to Colwall, you are both, my very dear friends, the kindest that you can be. Ah, but dearest, dearest Mrs. Martin, you can *understand*, with the same kindness that you use to me in other things. There is only one event in my life which never loses its bitterness; which comes back on me like a retreating wave, going and coming again, which was and *is my grief — I never had but one brother who loved and comprehended me.* And so there is just one thought which would be unbearable if I went into your neighbourhood; and you won't set it down, I am sure, as unpardonable weakness, much less as affectation, if I confess to you that I *never could bear it.* The past would be too strong for me. As to Hope End, it is nothing. I have been happier in my own home since, than I was there and then. But Torquay has made the neighbourhood of Hope End impossible to me. I could not eat or sleep in that air. You will forgive me for the weakness, I am certain. You know a little, if not entirely, how we loved one another; how I was first with

him, and *he* with me; while God knows that death and separation have no power over such love.

After all, we shall see you in Paris if not in England. We pass this winter in Paris, in the hope of my being able to bear the climate, for indeed Italy is too far. And if the winter does not disagree with me too much we mean to take a house and settle in Paris, so as to be close to you all, and that will be a great joy to me. You will pass through Paris this autumn (won't you?) on your way to Pau, and I shall see you. I do long to see you and make you know my husband. . . .

So far from regretting my marriage, it has made the happiness and honour of my life, and every unkindness received from my own house makes me press nearer to the tenderest and noblest of human hearts, *proved* by the uninterrupted devotion of nearly five years. Husband, lover, nurse — not one of these, has Robert been to me, but all three together. I neither regret my marriage, therefore, nor the manner of it, because the manner of it was a necessity of the act. I thought so at the time, I think so now; and I believe that the world in general will decide (if the world is to be really appealed to) that my opinion upon this subject (after five years) is worth more.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, do write to me. I keep my thoughts as far as I can from bitter things, and the affectionateness of my dearest sisters is indeed much on the other side. Also, we are both giddy with the kind attentions pressed on us from every side, from some of the best in England. It's hard to think at all in such a confusion. We met Tennyson (the Laureate) by a chance in Paris, who insisted that we should take possession of his house and servants at Twickenham and use them as long as we liked to stay in England. Nothing could be more warmly kind, and we accepted the note in which he gave us the right of possession for the sake of the generous autograph, though we never intended in our own minds to act out the proposition.

Since then, Mr. Arnould, the Chancery barrister, has begged us to go and live in his town house (we don't want houses, you see); Mrs. Fanny Kemble called on and left us tickets for her Shakespeare reading (by the way, I was charmed with her 'Hamlet'); Mr. Forster, of the 'Examiner,' gave us a magnificent dinner at Thames Ditton in sight of the swans; and we breakfast on Saturday with Mr. Rogers. Then we have seen the Literary Guild actors at the Hanover Square rooms, and we have passed an evening with Carlyle (one of the great sights in England, to my mind). He is a very warm friend of Robert's, so that on every account I was delighted to see him face to face. I can't tell you what else we have done or not done. It's a great dazzling heap of things new and strange. Barry Cornwall (Mr. Procter) came to see us every day till business swept him out of town, and dear Mrs. Jameson left her Madonna for us in despite of the printers. Such kindness, on all sides. Ah, there's kindness in England after all. Yet I grew cold to the heart as I set foot on the ground of it, and wished myself away. Also, the sort of life is not perhaps the best for me and the sort of climate is really the worst.

You heard of Mr. Kenyon's goodness to us; I told Arabel to tell you.

But I must end here. Another time I will talk of Paris, which I do hope will suit us as a residence. I was quite well there, the three weeks we stayed, and am far from well just now. You see, the weight of the atmosphere, which seems to me like lead, combined with the excitement, is too much at once. Oh, it won't be very bad, I dare say. I mean to try to be quiet, and abjure for the future the night air.

I should not omit to tell you in this quantity of egotism that my husband's father and sister have received me most affectionately. She is highly accomplished, with a heart to suit the head.

Now do write. Let me hear all about you, and how dear Mr. Martin and yourself are. Robert's cordial regards with those of

Your ever affectionate and ever grateful

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Saturday, [about August 1851].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Day by day, and hour by hour almost, I have wanted to thank you again and again for your remedy (which I did not use, by the bye, being much better), and to answer your inquiry about me, which really I could not deliver over to Arabel to answer; but the baby did not go to the country with Wilson, and I have been 'devoted' since she went away; *une âme perdue*, with not an instant out of the four-and-twenty hours to call my own. It appeared, at the last, that Wilson would have a drawback to her enjoyments in having the child, and I did not choose that: she had only a fortnight, you see, after five years, to be with her family. So I took her place with him; it was necessary, for he was in a state of deplorable grief when he missed her, and has refused ever since to allow any human being except me to do a single thing for him. I hold him in my arms at night, dress and wash him in the morning, walk out with him, and am not allowed either to read or write above three minutes at a time. He has learnt to say in English 'No more,' and I am bound to be obedient. Perhaps I may make out five minutes just to write this, for he is playing in the passage with a child of the house, but even so much is doubtful. He has made very good friends with a girl here, and Arabel has sent her maid ever so often to tempt him away for half an hour, so as to give me breathing time, but he won't be tempted: he has it in his head that the world is in a conspiracy against him to take 'mama' away after having taken 'Lily,' and he is bound to resist it.

After all, the place of nursery maid is more suitable to me than that of poetess (or even poet's wife) in this obstreperous London. I was nearly killed the first weeks, what with the climate, and what with the kindness (and what with the want of kindness), and looked wretchedly, whether Reynolds Peyton saw it or not, and coughed day and night, till Robert took fright, and actually fixed a day for taking me forthwith back to Paris. I had to give up a breakfast at Rogers', and shut myself up in two rooms for a week, and refuse, like Wiedeman, to be tempted out anywhere, but, after that, I grew better, and the wind changed, and now the cough, though not gone, is quieted, and I look a different person, and have ceased to grow thin. But a racketing life will never do for me, nor an English atmosphere, I am much afraid. The lungs seem to labour in this heavy air. Oh, it is so unlike the air of the Continent; I say nothing of Florence, but even of Paris, where I do wish to be able to live, on account of the nearness to this dear detestable England.

Now let me tell you of Wimpole Street. Henry has been very kind in coming not infrequently; he has a kind, good heart. Occy, too, I have seen three or four times, Alfred and Sette once. My dearest Arabel is, of course, here once if not twice a day, and for hours at a time, bringing me great joy always, and Henrietta's dear kindness in coming to London on purpose to see me, for a week, has left a perfume in my life. Both those beloved sisters have been, as ever, perfect to me. Arabel is vexed just now, and so am I, my brothers having fixed with papa to go out of town directly, and she caring more to stay where I am. . . .

I have not written to papa since our arrival through my fear of involving Arabel; but as soon as they go to the country I shall *hopelessly* write. He is very well and in good spirits, thank God.

We have spent two days at New Cross with my husband's father and sister, and she has been here con-

stantly. Most affectionate they are to me, and the babe is taken into adoration by Mr. Browning.

But here he is upon me again! Indeed, I have had wonderful luck in having been able to write all this; and now, God bless both of you, my dearest friends. Oh, I do feel to my heart all your kindness in wishing to have us with you, and, indeed, Robert *would* like to see Herefordshire, but——

[*The remainder of this letter is wanting.*]

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Wednesday, [September 1851].

My dearest Mrs. Martin,—I write in haste to you to tell you some things which you should hear without delay.

After Robert's letter to George had been sent three times to Wales and been returned twice, it reached him, and immediately upon its reaching him (to do George justice) he wrote a kind reply to apprise us that he would be at our door the same evening. So the night before last he came, and we are all good friends, thank God. I tenderly love him and the rest, and must for ever deplore that such poor barriers as a pedantic pride can set up should have interposed between long and strong and holy affections for years. But it is past, and I have been very happy in being held in his arms again, and seen in his eyes that I was still something more to him than a stone thrown away. So, if you have thought severely of him, you and dear Mr. Martin, do not any longer. Preserve your friendship for him, my dearest friends, and let all this foolish mistaken past be well past and forgotten. I think him looking thin, though it does not strike them so in Wimpole Street, certainly.

For the rest, the pleasantness is not on every side. It seemed to me right, notwithstanding that dear Mr. Kenyon

advised against it, to apprise my father of my being in England. I could not leave England without trying the possibility of his seeing me once, of his consenting to kiss my child once. So I wrote, and Robert wrote. A manly, true, straightforward letter his was, yet in some parts so touching to me and so generous and conciliating everywhere, that I could scarcely believe in the probability of its being read in vain. In reply he had a very violent and unsparing letter, with all the letters I had written to papa through these five years *sent back unopened, the seals unbroken.* What went most to my heart was that some of the seals were black with black-edged envelopes; so that he might have thought my child or husband dead, yet never cared to solve the doubt by breaking the seal. He said he regretted to have been forced to keep them by him until now, through his ignorance of where he should send them. So there's the end. I cannot, of course, write again. God takes it all into His own hands, and I wait.

We go on Tuesday. If I do not see you (as I scarcely hope to do now), it will be only a gladness delayed for a few months. We shall meet in Paris if we live. May God bless you both, dearest friends. I think of you and love you. Dear Mr. Martin, don't stay too late in England this year, for the climate seems to me worse than ever. Not that I have much cough now — I am much better — but the quality of the atmosphere is unmistakable to my lungs and air passages, and I believe it will be wise, on this account, to go away quickly.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Miss E. F. Haworth[1]

London: September 24, 1851.

My dear Miss Haworth, — I do hope you have not set us quite on the outside of your heart with the unfeeling and ungrateful. I say 'us' when I ought to have said 'me,' for you have known Robert, and you have not known *me*, and I am naturally less safe with you than he is — less safe in your esteem. We should both have gone to inquire after your health if he had not been attacked with influenza, and unfit for anything until the days you mentioned as the probable term of your remaining in town had passed. I waited till he should be better, and the malady lingered. Now he is well, and I do hope you may be so too. May it be! Bear us in mind and love, for we go away to-morrow to Paris — where, however, we shall *expect* you before long. Thank you, thank you, for the books. I have been struck and charmed with some things in the 'Companion' — especially, may I say, with the 'Modern Pygmalion,' which catches me on my weak side of the *love of wonder*. By the way, what am I to say of Swedenborg and mesmerism? So much I could — the books have so drawn and held me (as far as I was capable of being drawn or held, in this chaos of London) — that I will not speak at all. The note-page is too small — the haste I write in, too great.

God bless you, and good bye. Robert bids me give you his love (of the earnestest), and I have leave from you (have I not?) to be always affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

[1] Miss Haworth was a friend of Mr. Browning from very early days, and was commemorated by him in 'Sordello' under the name of 'Eyebright' (see Mrs. Orr's *Life*, p. 86). Her acquaintance with Mrs. Browning began with this visit to London, and ripened into a warm friendship. One subject of interest which they had in common was mesmerism, with the attendant mysteries of spiritualism and Swedenborgianism; and references to these are frequent in Mrs. Browning's letters to her.

The journey to Paris was effected at the end of September, and for about nine months they pitched their tent at No. 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées. It was a fortunate time to be in Paris for those who had no personal nervousness, and liked to be near the scene of great events —a most anxious time for any who were alarmed at disturbances, or took keenly to heart the horrors of street fighting. Fortunately for the Brownings, they, whether by temperament or through their Italian experiences, were not unduly disturbed at revolutions, while the horrors of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* were, no doubt, only partly known to Mrs. Browning at the time, and were palliated to her by the view she took of Napoleon's character. She had not, it is true, raised him as yet to the pinnacle on which his intervention on behalf of Italy subsequently caused her to place him, but (perhaps owing to what Mr. Kenyon called her 'immoral sympathy with power') she was always disposed to put a favourable construction on his actions, and the *coup d'état* was finally whitewashed for her by the approbation which the *plébiscite* of December 20 gave to his assumption of supreme power. Her views are, however, so fully set forth in her own letters that they need not be detailed here. For her husband's opinion of the character of Louis Napoleon, at least as it appeared to him when looking back after the lapse of years, it is only necessary to refer to 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.'

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
October 21, [1851].

But didn't you, dearest friend, get 'Casa Guidi' and the portrait of Mad^me^ de Goethe, left for you in the London house? I felt a *want* of leaving a word of adieu with these, and then the chaotic confusion in which we left England stifled the better purpose out of me.

With such mixed feelings I went away. Leaving love behind is always terrible, but it was not all love that I left, and there was relief in the state of mind with which I threw myself on the sofa at Dieppe — yes, indeed. Robert felt differently from me for once, as was natural, for it had been pure joy to him with his family and his friends, and I do believe he would have been capable of never leaving England again, had such an arrangement been practicable for us on some accounts. Oh England! I love and hate it at once. Or rather, where love of country ought to be in the heart, there is the mark of the burning iron in mine, and the depth of the scar shows the depth of the root of it. Well, I am writing you an amusing letter to-day, I think. After all, I wasn't made to live in England, or I should not cough there perpetually; while no sooner do I get to Paris than the cough vanishes — it is all but gone now. The lightness of the air here makes the place tenable — so far, at least. We made many an effort to get an apartment near the Madeleine, but we had to sacrifice sun or money, or breath, in going up to the top of a house, and the sacrifice seemed too great upon consideration, and we came off to the 'Avenue des Champs-Elysées,' on the sunshiny side of the way, to a southern aspect, and pretty cheerful carpeted rooms — a drawing room, a dressing and writing room for Robert, a small dining room, two comfortable bedrooms and a third bedroom upstairs for the *femme de service*, kitchen, &c., for two hundred francs a month. Not too dear, we think. About the same that we paid, out of the season, in London for the miserable accommodation we had there. But perhaps you won't come near us now; we may be too much 'out of the way' for you. Is it so indeed? Understand that close by us is a stand of *coupés* and *fiacres*, not to profane your ears with the mention of the continual stream of omnibuses by means of which you may reach the other end of Paris for six sous. And there might be a possibility

of taking a small apartment for you in this very house. See how I castle-build.

But if the Crystal Palace vanishes from the face of the earth, who shall trust any more in castles? Will they really pull it down, do you think? If it's a bubble, it's a glass bubble, and not meant, therefore, for bursting in the air, it seems to me. And you do want a place in England for sculpture, and also to show people how olives grow. What a beautiful winter garden it would be! But they will pull it down, perhaps; and then the last we shall have seen of it will be in this description of your letter, and *that's* seeing it worthily, too.

We were from home last night; we went to Lady Elgin's reception, and met a Madame Mohl, who was entertaining, and is to come to us this morning ——

She came as I wrote those words. She knows *you*, among her other advantages, and we have been talking of you, dear friend, and we are going to her on Friday evening to see some of the French. I shall have to go to prison very soon, I suppose, as usual, for the winter months, for here is the twenty-first of October, though this is the first fire we have had occasion for. It was colder this morning, but we have had exquisite weather, really, ever since we left England.

The 'elf' is flourishing in all good fairyhood, with a scarlet rose leaf on each cheek. Wilson says she never knew him to have such an irreproachable appetite. He is charmed with Paris, and its magnificent Punches, and roundabouts, and balloons—which last he says, looking up after them gravely, 'go to God.' The child has curious ideas about theology already. He is of opinion that God 'lives among the birds.' He has taken to calling himself '*Peninni*,'[1] which sounds something like a fairy's name, though he means it for 'Wiedeman.'

[1] So spelt in the earlier letters, but subsequently modified to 'Penini.'

Robert is in good spirits, and inclined to like Paris increasingly. Do you know I think you have an idea in England that you monopolise comforts, and I, for one, can't admit it. These snug 'apartments' exclude the draughty passages and staircases, which threaten your life every time that you run to your bedroom for a pocket-handkerchief in England. I much prefer the continental houses to the English ones, both for winter and summer, on this account.

So glad I am that you are nearly at the end of your work. To rest after work, what more than rest that always is!

Write to us often — do! We are not in Italy, and you have no excuse for even *seeming* to forget us. We are full in sight still, remember.

Are you aware that Carlyle travelled with us to Paris? He left a deep impression with me. It is difficult to conceive of a more interesting human soul, I think. All the bitterness is love with the point reversed. He seems to me to have a profound sensibility — so profound and turbulent that it unsettles his general sympathies. Do you guess what I mean the least in the world? or is it as dark as my writings are of course?

I hope on every account you will have no increase of domestic care. How is Miss Procter? How kind everybody was to us in England, and how affectionately we remember it! God bless you yourself! We love you for the past and the present, besides the future in December.

Your attached

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
October 22, [1851].

The pause in writing has come from the confusion in living, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, and no worse cause. It was a long while before we could settle ourselves in a private apartment, and we had to stay at the hotel and

wander about like doves turned out of the dove-cote, and seeking where to inhabit. . . . We have seen nothing in Paris, except the shell of it, yet. No theatres — nothing but business. Yet two evenings ago we hazarded going to a 'reception' at Lady Elgin's, in the Faubourg St. Germain, and saw some French, but nobody of distinction. It is a good house, I believe, and she has an earnest face which must mean something. We were invited, and *are* invited to go every Monday, and that Monday in particular, between eight and twelve. You go in a morning dress, and there is tea. Nothing can be more *sans façon*, and my tremors (for, do you know, I was quite nervous on the occasion, and charged Robert to keep close to me) were perfectly unjustified by the event. You see it was an untried form of society — like trying a Turkish bath. I expected to see Balzac's duchesses and *hommes de lettres* on all sides of me, but there was nothing very noticeable, I think, though we found it agreeable enough. We go on Friday evening to a Madame Mohl's, where we are to have some of the 'celebrities,' I believe, for she seems to know everybody of all colours, from white to red. Then Mazzini is to give us a letter to George Sand — come what will, we must have a letter to George Sand — and Robert has one to Emile Lorquet of the 'National,' and Gavarni of the 'Charivari,' so that we shall manage to thrust our heads into this atmosphere of Parisian journalism, and learn by experience how it smells. I hear that George Sand is seldom at Paris now. She has devoted herself to play writing, and employs a houseful of men, her son's friends and her own, in acting privately with her what she writes — trying it on a home stage before she tries it at Paris. Her son is a very ordinary young man of three-and-twenty, but she is fond of him. . . .

Never expect me to agree with you in that *cause célèbre* of 'ladies and gentlemen' against people of letters. I don't like the sort of veneer which passes in society — yes, I

like it, but I don't love it. I know what the thing is worth as a matter of furniture-accomplishment, and there an end. I should rather look at the scratched silent violin in the corner, with the sense that music has come out of it or will come. I am grateful to the man who has written a good book, and I recognise reverently that the roots of it are in him. And, do you know, I was not disappointed at all in what I saw of writers of books in London; no, not at all. Carlyle, for instance, I liked infinitely more in his personality than I expected to like him, and I saw a great deal of him, for he travelled with us to Paris and spent several evenings with us, we three together. He is one of the most interesting men I could imagine even, deeply interesting to me; and you come to understand perfectly, when you know him, that his bitterness is only melancholy, and his scorn sensibility. Highly picturesque too he is in conversation. The talk of writing men is very seldom as good.

And, do you know, I was much taken, in London, with a young authoress, Geraldine Jewsbury. You have read her books. There's a French sort of daring, half-audacious power in them, but she herself is quiet and simple, and drew my heart out of me a good deal. I felt inclined to love her in our half-hour's intercourse. And I liked Lady Eastlake too in another way, the 'lady' of the 'Letters from the Baltic,' nay, I liked her better than the 'lady.' . . .

Do write to me and tell me of your house, whether you are settling down in it comfortably.[1] In every new house there's a good deal of bird's work in treading and shuffling down the loose sticks and straws, before one can feel it is to be a nest. Robert laughs at me sometimes for pushing about the chairs and tables in a sort of distracted way, but it's the very instinct of making a sympathetical home, that works in me. We were miserably off in London. I

[1] Miss Mitford had lately moved into her new home at Swallowfield, about three miles from the old cottage at Three Mile Cross, commemorated in 'Our Village.'

couldn't tuck myself in anyhow. And we enjoy in proportion these luxurious armchairs, so good for the Lollards.

People say that the troops which pass before our windows every few days through the 'Arc de l'Étoile' to be reviewed, will bring the president back with them as 'emperor' some sunny morning not far off. As to waiting till *May*, nobody expects it. There is a great inward agitation, but the surface of things is smooth enough. Be constant, be constant! Constancy is a rare virtue even where it is not an undeniable piece of wisdom. Vive Napoleon II.!

As to the book, ah, you are always, and have always been, too good to *me*, that's quite certain; and if you are not too good to my husband, it is only because I am persuaded in my secret soul nobody *can* be too good to him.

He sends you his warm regards, and I send you a kiss of baby's, who is finishing his Babylonish education, unfortunate child, by learning a complement of French. I assure you he understands everything you can say to him in English as well as Italian, so that we won't be utterly denationalised.

God bless you. Say how you are and write soon.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
November 12, 1851.

I see your house, my beloved friend, and clap my hands for pleasure. It will suit you admirably, I see, plainly from Paris, and how right you are about the pretty garden, not to make it fine and modern; you have the right instincts about such things, and are too strong for Mrs. Loudon and the landscape gardeners. The only defect apparent to me at this distance is the size of the sitting room. . . . If you were to see what we call 'an apartment' in Paris! We have just a slip of a kitchen, and no passage, no staircase to take

up the space, which is altogether *spent* upon sitting and sleeping rooms. Talk of English comforts! It's a national delusion. The comfort of the continental way of life has only to be tested to be recognised (with the exception of the locks of doors and windows, which are *barbaric* here, there's no other word for it). The economy of a habitation is understood in Paris. You have the advantages of a large house without the disadvantages, without the coldness, without the dearness. And the beds, chairs and sofas are perfect things.

But the climate is not perfect, it seems, for we have had very cold weather the last ten days, and I am a prisoner as usual. Our friends swear to us that it is exceptional weather and that it will be warmer presently, and I listen with a sort of 'doubtful doubt' worthy of a metaphysician. It is some comfort to hear that it's below zero in London meanwhile, and that Scotland stands eight feet deep in snow.

We have a letter for George Sand (directed *à Madame George Sand*) from Mazzini, and we hear that she is to be in Paris within twelve days. Then we must make a rush and present it, for her stay here is not likely to be long, and I would not miss seeing her for a great deal, though I have not read one of her late dramas, and only by faith understand that her wonderful genius has conquered new kingdoms. Her last romance, 'Le Château des Desserts,' is treated disdainfully in the 'Athenæum.' I have not read *that* even, but Mr. Chorley is apt to be cold towards French writers and I don't expect his judgment as final therefore. Have you seen M. de la Mare's correspondence with Mirabeau? And do you ever catch sight of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes'? In the August number is an excellent and most pleasant article on my husband, elaborately written and so highly appreciatory as well nigh to satisfy *me*.[1] 'Set you down this' that there

[1] The article was by M. Joseph Milsand, and led to the formation of the warm friendship between him and Mr. Browning which lasted until the death of the former in 1886.

has sprung up in France lately an ardent admiration of the present English schools of poetry, or rather of the poetry produced by the present English schools, which they consider *an advance upon the poetry of the ages*. Think of *this*, you English readers who are still wearing broad hems and bombazeens for the Byron and Scott glorious days!

Let me think what I can tell you of the president. I have never seen his face, though he has driven past me in the boulevards, and past these windows constantly, but it is said that he is very like his portraits — and, yes, rumour and the gazettes speak of his riding well. Wilson and Wiedeman had an excellent view of him the other day as he turned into a courtyard to pay some visit, and she tells me that his carriage was half full of petitions and nosegays thrown through the windows. What a fourth act of a play we are in just now! It is difficult to guess at the catastrophe. Certainly he must be very sure of his hold on the people to propose repealing the May edict,[1] and yet there are persons who persist in declaring that nobody cares for him and that even a revision of the constitution will not bring about his re-election. *I* am of an opposite mind; though there is not much overt enthusiasm of the population in behalf of his person. Still, this may arise from a quiet resolve to keep him where he is, and an assurance that he can't be ousted in spite of the people and army. It is significant, I think, that Emile de Girardin should stretch out a hand (a little dirty, be it observed in passing), and that Lamartine, after fasting nineteen days and nights (a miraculous fast, without fear of the 'prefect'), should murmur a 'credo' in favour of his honesty. As to honesty, 'I do believe he's honest;' that is to say, he has acted out no dishonesty *as yet*, and we have no right to interpret

[1] The May edict restricted the franchise to electors who had resided three years in the same district. In October Louis Napoleon proposed to repeal it, and the refusal of the Assembly no doubt strengthened his hold on the democracy.

doubtful texts into dishonorable allegations. But for ambition — for ambition! Answer from the depth of your conscience, 'de profundis.' Is he or is he not an ambitious man? Does he or does he not mean in his soul to be Napoleon the Second? Yes, yes — I think, you think, we all think.

Robert's father and sister have been paying us a visit during the last three weeks. They are very affectionate to me, and I love them for his sake and their own, and am very sorry at the thought of losing them, which we are on the point of doing. We hope, however, to establish them in Paris if we can stay, and if no other obstacle should arise before the spring, when they must leave Hatcham. Little Wiedeman *draws* that; as you may suppose, he is adored by his grandpapa; and then, Robert! they are an affectionate family and not easy when removed one from another. Sarianna is full of accomplishment and admirable sense, even-tempered and excellent in all ways — devoted to her father as she was to her mother: indeed, the relations of life seem reversed in their case, and the father appears the child of the child. . . .

Perhaps you have not seen Eugène Sue's 'Mystères de Paris' — and I am not deep in the first volume yet. Fancy the wickedness and stupidity of trying to revive the distinctions and hatreds of race between the Gauls and Franks. The Gauls, please to understand, are the 'proletaires,' and the capitalists are the Frank invaders (call them Cosaques, says Sue) out of the forests of Germany! . . .

I saw no Mr. Harness; and no Talfourd of any kind. The latter was a kind of misadventure, as Lady Talfourd was on the point of calling on me when Robert would not let her. We were going away just then. Mr. Horne I had the satisfaction of seeing several times — you know how much regard I feel for him. One evening he had the kindness to bring his wife miles upon miles just to drink tea with us, and we were to have spent a day with them

somehow, half among the fields, but engagements came betwixt us adversely. She is less pretty and more interesting than I expected — looking very young, her black glossy hair hanging down her back in ringlets; with deep earnest eyes, and a silent listening manner. He was full of the 'Household Words,' and seems to write articles together with Dickens — which must be highly unsatisfactory, as Dickens's name and fame swallow up every sort of minor reputation in the shadow of his path. I shouldn't like, for my part (and if I were a fish), to herd with crocodiles. But I suppose the 'Household Words' *pay* — and that's a consideration. 'Claudie' I have not read. We have only just subscribed to a library, and we have been absorbed a good deal by our visitors. . . .

Write and don't leave off loving me. I will tell you of everybody noticeable whom I happen to see, and of George Sand among the first.

Love your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
December 10, [1851].

I receive your letter, dearest friend, and hasten to write a few brief words to save the post.

We have suffered neither fear nor danger — and I would not have missed the grand spectacle of the second of December[1] for anything in the world — scarcely, I say, for the sight of the Alps.

On the only day in which there was much fighting (Thursday), Wiedeman was taken out to walk as usual, under the precaution of keeping in the immediate neighbourhood of this house. This will prove to you how little we have feared for ourselves.

[1] The *coup d'état* took place in the early morning of December 2.

But the natural emotion of the situation one could not escape from, and on Thursday night I sate up in my dressing gown till nearly one, listening to the distant firing from the boulevards. Thursday was the only day in which there was fighting of any serious kind. There has been *no resistance* on the part of the real people — nothing but sympathy for the president, I *believe*, if you except the natural mortification and disappointment of baffled parties. To judge from our own tradespeople: 'il a bien fait! c'est le vrai neveu de son oncle!' such phrases rung on every tone expressed the prevailing sentiment.

For my own part I have not only more hope in the situation but more faith in the French people than is ordinary among the English, who really try to exceed one another in discoloration and distortion of the circumstances. The government was in a dead lock — what was to be done? Yes, all parties cried out, 'What was to be done?' and felt that we were waist deep a fortnight ago in a state of crisis. In throwing back the sovereignty from a 'representative assembly' which had virtually ceased to represent, into the hands of the people, I think that Louis Napoleon did well. The talk about 'military despotism' is absolute nonsense. The French army is eminently civic, and nations who take their ideas from the very opposite fact of a *standing army* are far from understanding how absolutely a French soldier and French citizen are the same thing. The independence of the elections seems to be put out of reach of injury; and intelligent men of adverse opinions to the government think that the majority will be large in its favour. Such a majority would certainly justify Louis Napoleon, or *should* — even with you in England.

I think you quite understate the amount of public virtue in France. The difficulties of statesmanship here are enormous. I do not accuse even M. Thiers of want of public virtue. What he has wanted, has been length and breadth of view — purely an intellectual defect — and his

petty, puny *tracasseries* destroyed the Republican Assembly just as it destroyed the throne of Louis Philippe, in spite of his own intentions.

There is a conflict of ideas in France, which we have no notion of in England, but we ought to understand that it does not involve the failing of *principle*, in the elemental moral sense. Be just to France, dear friend, you who are more than an Englishwoman — a Mrs. Jameson!

Everything is perfectly tranquil in Paris, I assure you — theatres full and galleries open as usual. At the same time, timid and discouraged persons say, 'Wait till after the elections,' and of course the public emotion will be a good deal excited at that time. Therefore, judge for yourself. For my own part I have not had the slightest cause for alarm of any kind — and there is my child! Judge. . . .

The weather is exquisite, and I am going out to walk directly. It is scarcely possible to bear a fire, and some of our friends sit with the window open. We are all well.

This should have gone to you yesterday, but we had visitors who talked past post time. The delay, however, has allowed of my writing more than I meant to have done in beginning this letter. Robert's best love.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

Robert says that according to the impression of the wisest there can be no danger. Don't wait till after the elections. The time is most interesting, and it is well worth your while to come and see for yourself.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
December 11, [1851].

To show how alive I am, dearest Mrs. Martin, I will tell you that I have just come home from a long walk to the Tuileries. We took a carriage to return, that's true. Then

yesterday I was out, besides, and last Saturday, *the 6th*, we drove down the boulevards to see the field of action on the terrible Thursday (the only day on which there was any fighting of consequence), counting the holes in the walls bored by the cannon, and looking at the windows smashed in. Even then, though the asphalte was black with crowds, the quiet was absolute, and most of the shops reopened. On Sunday the theatres were as full as usual, and our Champs-Elysées had quite its complement of promenaders. Wiedeman's prophecy had not been carried out, any more than the prophecies of the wiser may — the soldiers had not shot Punch.

And now I do beg you not to be down-hearted. See, if French blood runs in your veins, that you don't take a pedantic view of this question like an Englishwoman. Constitutional forms and essential principles of liberty are so associated in England, that they are apt to be confounded, and are, in fact, constantly confounded. For my part, I am too good a democrat to be afraid of being thrown back upon the primitive popular element, from impossible paper constitutions and unrepresenting representative assemblies. The situation was in a dead lock, and all the conflicting parties were full of dangerous hope of taking advantage of it; and I don't see, for my part, what better could be done for the French nation than to sweep the board clear and bid them begin again. With no sort of prejudice in favour of Louis Napoleon (except, I confess to you, some artistical admiration for the consummate ability and courage shown in his *coup d'état*), with no particular faith in the purity of his patriotism, I yet hold him justified *so far*, that is, I hold that a pure patriot would be perfectly justifiable in taking the same steps which up to this moment he has taken. He has broken, certainly, the husk of an oath, but fidelity to the intention of it seems to me reconcilable with the breach; and if he had not felt that he had the great mass of the people to back him, he is at least too able a man, be certain,

if not too honest a man, to have dared what he has dared. You will see the result of the elections. As to Paris, don't believe that Paris suffers violence from Louis Napoleon. The result of my own impressions is a conviction that *from the beginning* he had the sympathy of the whole population here with him, to speak generally, and exclusively of particular parties. All our tradespeople, for instance, milkman, breadman, wine merchant, and the rest, yes, even the shrewd old washerwoman, and the concierge, and our little lively servant were in a glow of sympathy and admiration. 'Mais, c'est le vrai neveu de son oncle! il est admirable! enfin la patrie sera sauvée.' The bourgeoisie has now accepted the situation, it is admitted on all hands. 'Scandalous adhesion!' say some. 'Dreadful apathy!' say others. Don't *you* say either one or the other, or I think you will be unjust to Paris and France.

The French people are very democratical in their tendencies, but they must have a visible type of hero-worship, and they find it in the bearer of that name Napoleon. That name is the only tradition dear to them, and it is deeply dear. That a man bearing it, and appealing at the same time to the whole people upon democratical principles, should be answered from the heart of the people, should neither astonish, nor shame, nor enrage anybody.

An editor of the 'National,' a friend of ours, feels this so much, that he gnashes his teeth over the imprudence of the extreme Reds, who did not set themselves to trample out the fires of Buonapartism while they had some possibility of doing it. 'Ce peuple a la tête *dure*,' said he vehemently.

As to military despotism, would France bear *that*, do you think? Is the French army, besides, made after the fashion of standing armies, such as we see in other countries? Are they not eminently *civic*, flesh of the people's flesh? I fear no military despotism for France, oh, none. Every soldier is a citizen, and every citizen is or has been a soldier.

Altogether, instead of despairing, I am full of hope. It seems to me probable that the door is open to a wider and calmer political liberty than France has yet enjoyed. Let us wait.

The American *forms* of republicanism are most uncongenial to this artistic people; but democratical institutions will deepen and broaden, I think, even if we should soon all be talking of the 'Empire.'

As to the repressive measures, why, grant the righteousness of the movement, and you must accept its conditions. Don't believe the tremendous exaggerations you are likely to hear on all sides — don't, I beseech you.

The president rode under our windows on December 2, through a shout extending from the Carrousel to the Arc de l'Etoile. The troups poured in as we stood and looked. No sight could be grander, and I would not have missed it, not for the Alps, I say.

You say nothing specific. How I should like to know *why* exactly you are out of spirits, and whether dear Mr. Martin is sad too. Robert and I have had some domestic *émeutes*, because he hates some imperial names; yet he confessed to me last night that the excessive and contradictory nonsense he had heard among Legitimists, Orleanists, and *English*, against the movement inclined him almost to a revulsion of feeling.

I would have written to you to-day, even if I had not received your letter. You will forgive that what I have written should have been scratched in the utmost haste to save the post. I can't even read it over. There's the effect of going out to walk the first thing in the morning. . . .

Your ever affectionate

BA — to both of you.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
Christmas Eve, [1851].

What can you have thought of me? That I was shot or deserved to be? Forgive in the first instance, dearest friend, and believe that I won't behave so any more, if in any way I can help it.

Tell me your thought now about L. Napoleon. He rode under our windows on December 2 through an immense shout from the Carrousel to the Arc de l'Etoile. There was the army and the sun of Austerlitz, and even I thought it one of the grandest of sights; for he rode there in the name of the people, after all. . . .

But we know men most opposed to him, writers of the old 'Presse' and 'National,' and Orleanists, and Legitimists, and the fury of all such I can scarcely express to you after the life. Emile de Girardin and his friends had a sublime scheme of going over in a body to England, and establishing a Socialist periodical, inscribing on their new habitation, 'Ici c'est la France.' He actually advertised for sale his beautiful house close by in the Champs-Elysées, asked ten thousand pounds (English) for it; and would have been 'rather disappointed,' as one of his sympathising friends confessed to us, if the offer had been accepted. I heard a good story the other day. A lady visitor was groaning politically to Madame de Girardin over the desperateness of the situation. 'Il n'y a que Celui, qui est en haut, qui peut nous en tirer,' said she, casting up her eyes. 'Oui, c'est vrai,' replied Madame, 'il le pourrait, lui,' glancing towards the second floor, where Emile was at work upon feuilletons. Not that she mistakes him habitually for her deity, by any manner of means, if scandal is to be listened to.

I hear that Lamennais is profoundly disgusted. He

said to a friend of ours, that the French people were 'putrefied to the heart.' Which means that they have one tradition still dear to them (the name of Napoleon) and that they put no faith in the Socialistic prophets. Wise or unwise they may be accordingly; but an affection and an apprehension can't reasonably be said to amount to a 'putrefaction,' I think. No, indeed.

Louis Napoleon is said to say (a bitter foe of his told me this) that 'there will be four phrases of his life.' The first was all rashness and imprudence, but 'it was necessary to make him known:' the second, 'the struggle with and triumph over anarchy:' the third, 'the settlement of France and the pacification of Europe:' the fourth, a *coup de pistolet. Se non è vero, è ben trovato.* Nothing is more likely than the catastrophe in any case; and the violence of the passions excited in the minority makes me wonder at his surviving a day even. Do you know I heard your idol of a Napoleon (the antique hero) called the other evening through a black beard and gnashing teeth, 'le plus grand scélérat du monde,' and his empire, 'le règne du Satan,' and his marshals, 'les coquins.' After that, I won't tell you that 'le neveu' is reproached with every iniquity possible to anybody's public and private life. Perhaps he is not 'sans reproche' in respect to the latter, not altogether; but one can't believe, and oughtn't, even infinitesimally, the things which are talked on the subject. . . .

Ah, I am so vexed about George Sand. She came, she has gone, and we haven't met! There was a M. François who pretended to be her very very particular friend, and who managed the business so particularly ill, from some motive or some incapacity, that he did not give us an opportunity of presenting our letter. He did not '*dare*' to present it for us, he said. She is shy — she distrusts book-making strangers, and she intended to be incognita while in Paris. He proposed that we should leave it at the theatre, and Robert refused. Robert said he wouldn't have our

letter mixed up with the love letters of the actresses, or perhaps given to the 'premier comique' to read aloud in the green room, as a relief to the 'Chère adorable,' which had produced so much laughter. Robert was a little proud and M. François very stupid; and I, between the two, in a furious state of dissent from either. Robert tries to smooth down my ruffled plumage now, by promising to look out for some other opportunity, but the late one has gone. She is said to have appeared in Paris in a bloom of recovered beauty and brilliancy of eyes, and the success of her play, 'Le Mariage de Victorine,' was complete. A strange, wild, wonderful woman, certainly. While she was here, she used a bedroom which belongs to her son — a mere 'chambre de garçon' — and for the rest, saw whatever friends she chose to see only at the 'café' where she breakfasted and dined. She has just finished a romance, we hear, and took fifty-two nights to write it. She writes only at night. People call her Madame Sand. There seems to be no other name for her in society or letters.

Now listen. Alexander Dumas *does* write his own books, that's a fact. You know I always maintained it, through the odour of Dumas in the books, but people swore the contrary with great foolish oaths worth nothing. Maquet prepares historical materials, gathers together notes, and so on, but Dumas writes every word of his books with his own hand, and with a facility amounting to inspiration, said my informant. He called him a great savage negro child. If he has twenty sous and wants bread, he buys a pretty cane instead. For the rest, 'bon enfant,' kind and amiable. An inspired negro child! In debt at this moment, after all the sums he has made, said my informant — himself a most credible witness and highly cultivated man.

I heard of Eugène Sue, too, yesterday. Our child is invited to a Christmas tree and party, and Robert says he is too young to go, but I persist in sending him for half an hour with Wilson — oh, really I must — though he will be by

far the youngest of the thirty children invited. The lady of the house, Miss Fitton, an English resident in Paris, an elderly woman, shrewd and kind, said to Robert that she had a great mind to have Eugène Sue, only he was so scampish. I think that was the word, or something alarmingly equivalent. Now I should like to see Eugène Sue with my little innocent child in his arms; the idea of the combination pleases me somewhat. But I sha'n't see it in any case. We had three cold days last week, which brought back my cough and took away my voice. I am dumb for the present and can't go out any more. . . .

At last I have caught sight of an advertisement of your book. A very catching title, and if I mayn't compliment you upon it, I certainly do your publisher. I dare say the book is charming, and the more of yourself in it, the more charming.

Write, and say how you are always when you write. Say, too, how you continue to like your new house. We heard a good deal of you from Mr. Fields, though he came to us only once. With him came Mr. Longfellow, the poet's brother, who is at present in Paris — I mean the brother, not the poet. Robert's love, may I say?

Wiedeman has struck up two friendships: one, with the small daughter of our concierge and one with a little Russian princess, a month younger than himself. He calls them both 'boys,' having no idea yet of the less sublime sex, but he likes the plebeian best. May God make you happy on this and other seasons.

Love your affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
January 17, [1852].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — If you think I have not written to you, you must be (as you are) the most lenient of friends,

not to give me up for ever. I answered your first letter by return of post and at great length. About a fortnight ago, Robert heard from Madame Mohl, who heard from somebody at Pau that you were 'waiting anxiously to hear from me,' upon which I wrote a second letter. And that, too, did not reach you? Is it possible? But I am innocent, innocent, innocent. See how innocent. Now, if M. le Président has stopped my letters, or if he ponders in his imperial mind how to send me out of Paris, he is as ungrateful as a king, because I have been taking his part all this time at a great cost of domestic *émeutes*. So you would have known, if you had received my letters. The *coup d'état* was a grand thing, dramatically and poetically speaking, and the appeal to the people justified it in my eyes, considering the immense difficulty of the circumstances, the impossibility of the old constitution and the impracticability of the house of assembly. Now that's all over. For the rest — the new constitution — I can't say as much for it; it disappoints me immensely. Absolute government, *no*, while the taxes and acceptance of law lies, as he leaves it, with the people; but there are stupidities undeniable, I am afraid, and how such a constitution is to *work*, and how marshals and cardinals are to help to work it, remains to be seen. I fear we have not made a good change even from the 'constitution Marrast'[1] after all. The English newspapers have made me so angry, that I scarcely know whether I am as much ashamed, yet the shame is very great. As if the people of France had not a right to vote as they pleased![2] We understand nothing in England. As Cousin said, long ago, we are 'insular' of understanding. France may be mistaken in her speculations, as she often is; and if any mistake has been lately committed, it will be corrected by herself in a short time. Ignoble in her speculations she never is. . . .

[1] The constitution of 1848.

[2] The point was rather whether they had the *power*.

I must tell you, my dearest friend, that for some days past I have been very much upset, and am scarcely now fairly on my feet again, in consequence of becoming suddenly aware of a painful indiscretion committed by an affectionate and generous woman. I refer to Miss Mitford's account of me in her new book.[1] We heard of it in a strange way, through M. Philaret Chasles, of the Collège de France, beginning a course of lectures on English literature, and announcing an extended notice of E. B. B., 'the veil from whose private life had lately been raised by Miss Mitford.' Somebody who happened to be present told us of it, and while we were wondering and uncomfortable, up came a writer in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' to consult Robert upon a difficulty he was in. He was engaged, he said, upon an article relating to me, and the proprietors of the review had sent him a number of the 'Athenæum,' which contained an extract from Miss M.'s book, desiring him to make use of the biographical details. Now it struck him immediately, he said, on reading the passage, that it was likely to give me great pain, and he was so unwilling to be the means of giving me more pain that he came to Robert to ask him how he should act. Do observe the delicacy and sensibility of this man — a man, a foreigner, a Frenchman! I shall be grateful to him as long as I live.[2]

Robert has seen the extract in the 'Athenæum.' It refers to the great affliction of my life, with the most affectionate intentions and the obtusest understanding. I know I am morbid, but this thing should not have been done indeed. Now, I shall be liable to see recollections dreadful

[1] Miss Mitford's *Recollections of a Literary Life* contained a chapter relating to Robert and Elizabeth Browning, in which, with the best intentions in the world, she told the story of the drowning of Edward Barrett, and of the gloom cast by it on his sister's life. It was this revival of the greatest sorrow of her life that so upset Mrs. Browning.

[2] No doubt M. Milsand was the writer in question.

to me, thrust into every vulgar notice of my books. I shall be afraid to see my books reviewed anywhere. Oh! I have been so deeply shaken by all this. *You* will understand, I am certain, and I could not help speaking of it to you, because I was certain.

I am answering your note, observe, by return of post. Do let me know if you receive what I write this time. Robert will direct for me, having faith in his superior legibleness, and I accept the insult implied in the opinion.

God bless you. Do write. And never doubt my grateful affection for you, whether posts go ill or well.

Robert is going out to inquire about 'My Novel.' His warm regards with mine to dear Mr. Martin and yourself. This is a scratch rather than a letter, but I would rather send it to you in haste than wait for another post.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

The following letter marks the beginning of a new friendship, with Miss Mulock, afterwards Mrs. Craik, the authoress of 'John Halifax, Gentleman.' The subsequent letters are in very affectionate tones, but it does not appear that the correspondence ever reached any very extended dimensions.

To Miss Mulock

Paris, 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
January 21, [1852].

I hear from England that you have dedicated a book to me with too kind and most touching words. To thank you for such a proof of sympathy, to thank you from my heart, cannot surely be a wrong thing to do, it seems so natural and comes from so irresistible an impulse.

I read a book of yours once at Florence, which first made [me] know you pleasantly, and afterwards (that was at Florence, too) there came a piercing touch from a hand in the air — whether yours also, I cannot dare to guess — which

has preoccupied me a good deal since. If I speak to you in mysteries, forgive me. Let it be clear at least, that I am very happy to be grateful to you for the honor you have done me in your dedication, and that my husband, moved more, as he always is, by honor paid to me than to himself, thanks you beside. I will not keep back his thanks, which are worth more than mine can be.

For the rest, we have, neither of us, seen the book yet, nor even read an exact copy of the words in question. Only the rumour of them appears to run that I am 'not likely ever to see you.' And why am I never to see you, pray? Unlikelier pleasures have been granted to me, and I will not indeed lose hold of the hope of this pleasure.

Allow it to

Your always obliged

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
[January–February 1852].

My very dear friend, let me begin what I have to say by recognising you as the most generous and affectionate of friends. I never could mistake the least of your intentions; you were always, from first to last, kind and tenderly indulgent to me — always exaggerating what was good in me, always forgetting what was faulty and weak — keeping me by force of affection in a higher place than I could aspire to by force of vanity; loving me always, in fact. Now let me tell you the truth. It will prove how hard it is for the tenderest friends to help paining one another, since *you* have pained *me*. See what a deep wound I must have in me, to be pained by the touch of such a hand. Oh, I am morbid, I very well know. But the truth is that I have been miserably upset by your book, and that if I had had the least imagination of your intending to touch upon

certain biographical details in relation to me, I would have conjured you by your love to me and by my love to you, to forbear it altogether. You cannot understand; no, you cannot understand with all your wide sympathy (perhaps, because you are not morbid, and I am), the sort of susceptibility I have upon one subject. I have lived heart to heart (for instance) with my husband these five years: I have never yet spoken out, in a whisper even, what is in me; never yet could find heart or breath; never yet could bear to hear a word of reference from his lips. And now those dreadful words are going the round of the newspapers, to be verified here, commented on there, gossiped about everywhere; and I, for my part, am frightened to look at a paper as a child in the dark — as unreasonably, you will say — but what then? what drives us mad is our unreason. I will tell you how it was. First of all, an English acquaintance here told us that she had been hearing a lecture at the Collège de France, and that the professor, M. Philaret Chasles, in the introduction to a series of lectures on English poetry, had expressed his intention of noticing Tennyson, Browning, &c., and E. B. B. — 'from whose private life the veil had been raised in so interesting a manner lately by Miss Mitford.' In the midst of my anxiety about this, up comes a writer of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' to my husband, to say that he was preparing a review upon me and had been directed by the editor to make use of some biographical details extracted from your book into the 'Athenæum,' but that it had occurred to him doubtfully whether certain things might not be painful to me, and whether I might not prefer their being omitted in his paper. (All this time we had seen neither book nor 'Athenæum.') Robert answered for me that the omission of such and such things would be much preferred by me, and accordingly the article appears in the 'Revue' with the passage from your book garbled and curtailed as seemed best to the quoter. Then Robert set about pro-

curing the 'Athenæum' in question. He tells me (and *that* I perfectly believe) that, for the facts to be given at all, they could not possibly be given with greater delicacy; oh, and I will add for myself, that for them to be related by anyone during my life, I would rather have *you* to relate them than another. But why should they be related during my life? There was no need, no need. To show my nervous susceptibility in the length and breadth of it to you, I *could not* (when it came to the point) *bear to read* the passage extracted in the 'Athenæum,' notwithstanding my natural anxiety to see exactly what was done. I could not bear to do it. I made Robert read it aloud — with omissions — so that I know all your kindness. I feel it deeply; through tears of pain I feel it; and if, as I dare say you will, you think me very very foolish, do not on that account think me ungrateful. Ungrateful I never can be to you, my much loved and kindest friend.

I hear your book is considered one of your best productions, and I do not doubt that the opinion is just. Thank you for giving it to us, thank you.

I don't like to send you a letter from Paris without a word about your hero — 'handsome,' I fancy not, nor the imperial type. I have not seen his face distinctly. What do you think about the constitution? Will it work, do you fancy, now-a-days in France? The initiative of the laws, put out of the power of the legislative assembly, seems to me a stupidity; and the senators, in their fine dresses, make me wink a little. Also, I hear that the 'senatorial cardinals' don't please the peasants, who hate the priesthood as much as they hate the 'Cossacks.' On the other hand, Montalembert was certainly in bed the other day with vexation, because 'nobody could do anything with Louis Napoleon — he was obstinate;' 'nous nous en lavons les mains,' and that fact gives me hope that not too much indulgence is intended to the church. There's to be a ball at the Tuileries with 'court dresses,' which is 'un peu fort' for

a republic. By the way, rumour (with apparent authority justifying it) says, that a black woman opened her mouth and prophesied to him at Ham, 'he should be the head of the French nation, and be assassinated in a ball-room.' I was assured that he believes the prophecy firmly, 'being in all things too superstitious' and fatalistical.

I was interrupted in this letter yesterday. Meantime comes out the decree against the Orleans property, which I disapprove of altogether. It's the worst thing yet done, to my mind. Yet the Bourse stands fast, and the decree is likely enough to be popular with the ouvrier class. There are rumours of tremendously wild financial measures, only I believe in no rumours just now, and apparently the Bourse is as incredulous on this particular point. If I thought (as people say) that we are on the verge of a 'law' declaring the Roman Catholic religion the State religion, I should give him up at once; but this would be contrary to the traditions of the Empire, and I can't suppose it to be probable on any account.

Observe, I am no Napoleonist. I am simply a *democrat*, and hold that the majority of a nation has the right of choice upon the question of its own government, *even where it makes a mistake*. Therefore the outcry of the English newspapers is most disgusting to me. For the rest, one can hardly do strict justice, at this time of transition, to the ultimate situation of the country; we must really wait a little, till the wind and rain shall have ceased to dash so in one's eyes. The wits go on talking, though, all the same; and I heard a suggestion yesterday, that, for the effaced 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité,' should be written up, 'Infanterie, cavallerie, artillerie.' That's the last 'mot,' I believe. The salons are very noisy. A lady was ordered to her country seat the other day for exclaiming, 'Et il n'y a pas de Charlotte Corday.'

Forgive, with this dull letter, my other defects. Always

I am frank to you, saying what is in my heart; and there is always there, dearest Miss Mitford, a fruitful and grateful affection to you from your

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 15, [1852].

Thank you, thank you, my beloved friend. Yes; I do understand in my heart all your kindness. Yes, I do believe that on some points I am full of disease; and this has exposed me several times to shocks of pain in the ordinary intercourse of the world, which for bystanders were hard, I dare say, to make out. Once at the Baths of Lucca I was literally nearly struck down to the ground by a single word said in all kindness by a friend whom I had not seen for ten years. The blue sky reeled over me, and I caught at something, not to fall. Well, there is no use dwelling on this subject. I understand your affectionateness and tender consideration, I repeat, and thank you; and love you, which is better. Now, let us talk of reasonable things.

Béranger lives close to us, and Robert has seen him in his white hat wandering along the asphalte. I had a notion somehow that he was very old; but he is only elderly, not much indeed above sixty (which is the prime of life now-a-days), and he lives quietly and keeps out of scrapes poetical and political, and if Robert and I had but a little less modesty we are assured that we should find access to him easy. But we can't make up our minds to go to his door and introduce ourselves as vagrant minstrels, when he may probably not know our names. We never *could* follow the fashion of certain authors who send their books about without intimations of their being likely to be acceptable or not, of which practice poor Tennyson knows too much for his peace. If, indeed, a letter of introduction to Béranger were vouchsafed to us from any benign quarter, we should

both be delighted, but we must wait patiently for the influence of the stars. Meanwhile, we have at last sent our letter (Mazzini's) to George Sand, accompanied with a little note signed by both of us, though written by me, as seemed right, being the woman. We half despaired in doing this, for it is most difficult, it appears, to get at her, she having taken vows against seeing strangers in consequence of various annoyances and persecutions in and out of print, which it's the mere instinct of a woman to avoid. I can understand it perfectly. Also, she is in Paris for only a few days, and under a new name, to escape from the plague of her notoriety. People said to us: 'She will never see you; you have no chance, I am afraid.' But we determined to try. At last I pricked Robert up to the leap, for he was really inclined to sit in his chair and be proud a little. 'No,' said I, 'you *shan't* be proud, and I *won't* be proud, and we *will* see her. I won't die, if I can help it, without seeing George Sand.' So we gave our letter to a friend who was to give it to a friend, who was to place it in her hands, her abode being a mystery and the name she used unknown. The next day came by the post this answer:

Madame, — J'aurai l'honneur de vous recevoir dimanche prochain rue Racine 3. C'est le seul jour que je puisse passer chez moi, et encore je n'en suis pas absolument certaine. Mais j'y ferai tellement mon possible, que ma bonne étoile m'y aidera peut-être un peu.

Agréez mille remerciments de cœur, ainsi que Monsieur Browning, que j'espère voir avec vous, pour la sympathie que vous m'accordez.

GEORGE SAND.

Paris: 12 février, 52.

This is graceful and kind, is it not? And we are going to-morrow; I, rather at the risk of my life. But I shall roll myself up head and all in a thick shawl, and we shall go in

a close carriage, and I hope I shall be able to tell you about the result before shutting up this letter.

One of her objects in coming to Paris this time was to get a commutation of the sentence upon her friend Dufraisse, who was ordered to Cayenne. She had an interview accordingly with the President. He shook hands with her and granted her request, and in the course of conversation pointed to a great heap of 'Decrees' on the table, being hatched 'for the good of France.' I have heard scarcely anything of him, except from his professed enemies; and it is really a good deal the simple recoil from manifest falsehoods and gross exaggerations which has thrown me on the ground of his defenders. For the rest, it remains to be *proved*, I think, whether he is a mere ambitious man, or better — whether his personality or his country stands highest with him as an object. I thought and still think that a Washington might have dissolved the Assembly as he did, and appealed to the people. Which is not saying, however, that he is a Washington. We must wait, I think, to judge the man. Only it is right to bear in mind one fact, that, admitting the lawfulness of the *coup d'état*, you must not object to the dictatorship. And, admitting the temporary necessity of the dictatorship, it is absolute folly to expect under it the liberty and ease of a regular government.

What has saved him with me from the beginning was his appeal to the people, and what makes his government respectable in my eyes is the answer of the people to that appeal. Being a democrat, I dare to be so *consequently*. There never was a more legitimate chief of a State than Louis Napoleon is now — elected by seven millions and a half; and I do maintain that, ape or demi-god, to insult him where he is, is to insult the people who placed him there. As to the stupid outcry in England about forced votes, voters pricked forward by bayonets — why, nothing can be more stupid. Nobody not blinded by passion could maintain such a thing for a moment. No French-

man, however blinded by passion, has maintained it in my presence.

A very philosophically minded man (French) was talking of these things the other day — one of the most thoughtful, liberal men I ever knew of any country, and high and pure in his moral views — also (let me add) more *anglomane* in general than I am. He was talking of the English press. He said he 'did it justice for good and noble intentions' (more than I do!), 'but marvelled at its extraordinary ignorance. Those writers did not know the A B C of France. Then, as to Louis Napoleon, whether he was right or wrong, they erred in supposing him not to be in earnest with his constitution and other remedies for France. The fact was, he not only was in earnest — he was even *fanatical*.'

There is, of course, much to deplore in the present state of affairs — much that is very melancholy. The constitution is not a model one, and no prospect of even comparative liberty of the Press has been offered. At the same time, I hope still. As tranquillity is established, there will be certain modifications; this, indeed, has been intimated, and I think the Press will by degrees attain to its emancipation. Meanwhile, the 'Athenæum' and other English papers say wrongly that there is a censure established on books. There is a censure on pamphlets and newspapers — on *books*, no. Cormenin is said to have been the adviser of the Orleans confiscation. . . .

To John Kenyon

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 15, 1852.

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — Robert sends you his Shelley,[1] having a very few copies allowed to him to dispose of. I

[1] The (forged) *Letters of Shelley*, to which Mr. Browning wrote an introduction, dealing rather with Shelley in general than with the letters.

think you have Shelley's other letters, of which this volume is the supplement, and you will not be sorry to have Robert's preface thrown in, though he makes very light of it himself.

You never write a word to us, and so I don't mean to send you a letter to-day — only as few lines as I can drop in a sulky fit, repenting as I go on. As to politics, you know you have all put me in the corner because I stand up for universal suffrage, and am weak enough to fancy that seven millions and a half of Frenchmen have some right to an opinion on their own affairs. It's really fatal in this world to be consequent — it leads one into damnable errors. So I shall not say much more at present. You must bear with me — dear Miss Bayley and all of you — and believe of me, if I am ever so wrong, that I do at least pray from my soul, 'May the right prevail!' — loving right, truth, justice, and the people through whatever mistakes. As it was in the beginning, from 'Casa Guidi Windows,' so it is now from the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. I am most humanly liable, of course, to make mistakes, and am by temperament perhaps over hopeful and sanguine. But I do see with my own eyes and feel with my own spirit, and not with other people's eyes and spirits, though they should happen to be the dearest — and that's the very best of me, be certain, so don't quarrel with it too much.

As to the worst of the President, let him have vulture's beak, hyena's teeth, and the rattle of the great serpent, it's nothing to the question. Let him be Caligula's horse raised to the consulship — what then? I am not a Buonapartist; I am simply a 'democrat,' as you say. I simply hold to the fact that, such as he is, the people chose him, and to the opinion that they have a right to choose whom they please. When your English Press denies the *fact of the choice* (a fact which the most passionate of partymen does not think of denying here), *I* seem to have a right to another opinion which might strike you as unpatriotic if I uttered it in this place. *Hic tacet*, then, rather than *jacet*.

For the rest, for heaven's sake and the truth's, do let us try to take breath a little and be patient. Let us wait till the dust of the struggle clears away before we take measures of the circus. We can't have the liberty of a regular government under a dictatorship. And if the 'constitution' which is coming is not model, it may wear itself into shape by being worked calmly. These new boots will be easier to the feet after half an hour's walking. Not that I like the pinching meanwhile. Not that stringencies upon the Press please *me* — no, nor arrests and imprisonments. I like these things, God knows, as little as the loudest curser of you all, but I don't think it necessary and lawful to exaggerate and over-colour, nor to paint the cheeks of sorrows into horrors, nor to talk, like the 'Quarterly Review' (betwixt excuses for the King of Naples), of two thousand four hundred persons being cut to mincemeat in the streets of Paris, nor to call boldness hypocrisy (because hypocrisy is the worse word), and the appeal to the sovereignty of the people usurpation, and universal suffrage the pricking of bayonets. Above all, I would avoid insulting the whole French nation, who have judged their own position and acted accordingly. If Louis Napoleon disappoints their expectation, he won't sit long where he is. Of that I feel satisfactory assurance; and, considering the national habits of insurrection, I really think that others may.

Meanwhile it is just to tell you that the two deepest-minded persons whom we have known in Paris — one an ultra-Republican of European reputation (I don't like mentioning names), and the other a Constitutionalist of the purest and noblest moral nature — are both inclined to take favorable views of the President's personal character and intentions. For my part, I don't pretend to an opinion. He may be, as they say, '*bon enfant*,' '*homme de conscience*,' and 'so much in earnest as to be fanatical,' or he may be a wretch and a reptile, as you say in England. That's nothing to the question as I see it. I don't take it up by

that handle at all. Caligula's horse or the people's 'Messiah,' as I heard him called the other day — what then? You are wonderfully intolerant, you in England, of equine consulships, you who bear with quite sufficient equanimity a great rampancy of beasts all over the world — Mr. Forster not blowing the trumpet of war, and Mrs. Alfred Tennyson not loading the rifles.

There now — I've done with politics to-day. Only just let me tell you that Cormenin is said to be the adviser in the matter of the Orleans decrees. So much the worse for him.

Whom do you think I saw yesterday? George Sand. Oh, I have been in such fear about it! It's the most difficult thing to get access to her, and, notwithstanding our letter from Mazzini, we were assured on all sides that she would not see us. She has been persecuted by book-makers — run to ground by the race, and, after having quite lost her on her former visit to Paris, it was in half despair that we seized on an opportunity of committing our letter of introduction to a friend of a friend of hers, who promised to put it into her own hands. With the letter I wrote a little note — I writing, as I was the woman, and both of us signing it. To my delight, we had an answer by the next day's post, gracious and graceful, desiring us to call on her last Sunday.

So we went. Robert let me at last, though I had a struggle for even that, the air being rather over-sharp for me. But I represented to him that one might as well lose one's life as one's peace of mind for ever, and if I lost seeing her I should with difficulty get over it. So I put on my respirator, smothered myself with furs, and, in a close carriage, did not run much risk after all.

She received us very kindly, with hand stretched out, which I, with a natural emotion (I assure you my heart beat), stooped and kissed, when she said quickly, 'Mais non, je ne veux pas,' and kissed my lips. She is somewhat

large for her height — not tall — and was dressed with great nicety in a sort of grey serge gown and jacket, made after the ruling fashion just now, and fastened up to the throat, plain linen collarette and sleeves. Her hair was uncovered, divided on the forehead in black, glossy bandeaux, and twisted up behind. The eyes and brow are noble, and the nose is of a somewhat Jewish character; the chin a little recedes, and the mouth is not good, though mobile, flashing out a sudden smile with its white projecting teeth. There is no sweetness in the face, but great moral as well as intellectual capacities — only it never *could* have been a beautiful face, which a good deal surprised me. The chief difference in it since it was younger is probably that the cheeks are considerably fuller than they used to be, but this of course does not alter the type. Her complexion is of a deep olive. I observed that her hands were small and well-shaped. We sate with her perhaps three-quarters of an hour or more — in which time she gave advice and various directions to two or three young men who were there, showing her confidence in us by the freest use of names and allusion to facts. She seemed to be, in fact, *the man* in that company, and the profound respect with which she was listened to a good deal impressed me. You are aware from the newspapers that she came to Paris for the purpose of seeing the President in behalf of certain of her friends, and that it was a successful mediation. What is peculiar in her manners and conversation is the absolute simplicity of both. Her voice is low and rapid, without emphasis or variety of modulation. Except one brilliant smile, she was grave — indeed, she was speaking of grave matters, and many of her friends are in adversity. But you could not help seeing (both Robert and I saw it) that in all she said, even in her kindness and pity, there was an under-current of scorn. A scorn of pleasing she evidently had; there never could have been a colour of coquetry in that woman. Her very freedom from affectation and consciousness

had a touch of disdain. But I liked her. I did not love her, but I felt the burning soul through all that quietness, and was not disappointed in George Sand. When we rose to go I could not help saying, 'C'est pour la dernière fois,' and then she asked us to repeat our visit next Sunday, and excused herself from coming to see us on the ground of a great press of engagements. She kissed me again when we went away, and Robert kissed her hand.

Lady Elgin has offered to take him one day this week to visit Lamartine (who, we hear, will be glad to see us, having a cordial feeling towards England and English poets), but I shall wait for some very warm day for that visit, not meaning to run mortal risks, except for George Sand. *Nota bene.* We didn't see her smoke.

Robert has ventured to send to your house, my dearest friend, two copies of 'Shelley' besides yours — one for Mr. Procter, and one for Mrs. Jameson, with kindest love, both. There is no hurry about either, you know. We wanted another for dear Miss Bayley, but we have only six copies, and don't keep one for ourselves, and she won't care, I dare say.

Your ever most affectionate and grateful

BA.

Will you let your servant put this letter into the post for Miss Mitford? She upset me by her book, but had the most affectionate intentions, and I am obliged to her for what she meant. Then I am morbid, I know.

Tell dearest Miss Bayley, with my love, I shall write to her soon.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées: February 26, [1852].

Never believe of me so bad a thing as that I could have received from you, my ever dear and very dear friend, such a letter as you describe, and rung hollow in return. I did

not get your letter, so how could I send an answer? Your letter's lost, like some other happy things. But I thank you for it fervently, guessing from what you say the sympathy and affection of it. I thank you for it most gratefully.

As for poor dear Miss Mitford's book, I was entirely upset by the biography she thought it necessary or expedient to give of me. Oh, if our friends would but put off anatomising one till after one was safely dead, and call to mind that, previously, we have nerves to be agonised and morbid brains to be driven mad! I am morbid, I know. I can't bear some words even from Robert. Like the lady who lay in the grave, and was ever after of the colour of a shroud, so I am white-souled, the past has left its mark with me for ever. And now (this is the worst) every newspaper critic who talks of my poems may refer to other things. I shall not feel myself safe a moment from references which stab like a knife.

But poor dear Miss Mitford, if we don't forgive what's meant as kindness, how are we to forgive what's meant as injury? In my first agitation I felt it as a real vexation that I couldn't be angry with her. How could I, poor thing? She has always loved me, and been so anxious to please me, and this time she seriously thought that Robert and I would be delighted. Extraordinary defect of comprehension!

Still, I did not, I could not, conceal from her that she had given me great pain, and she replied in a tone which really made me almost feel ungrateful for being pained, she said 'rather that her whole book had perished than have given me a moment's pain.' How are you to feel after *that?*

For the rest, it appears that she had merely come forward to the rescue of my reputation, no more than so. Sundry romantic tales had been in circulation about me. I was 'in widow's weeds' in my habitual costume — and, in fact, before I was married I had grievously scandalised the

English public (the imaginative part of the public), and it was expedient to 'tirer de l'autre côté.'

Well, I might have laughed at *that* — but I didn't. I wrote a very affectionate letter, for I really love Miss Mitford, though she understands me no more under certain respects than you in England understand Louis Napoleon and the French nation. Love's love. She meant the best to me — and so, do you, who have a much more penetrating sense of delicacy, forgive her for my sake, dear friend. . . .

Of the memoirs of Madame Ossoli, I know only the extracts in the 'Athenæum.' She was a most interesting woman to me, though I did not sympathise with a large portion of her opinions. Her written works are just *naught*. She said herself they were sketches, thrown out in haste and for the means of subsistence, and that the sole production of hers which was likely to represent her at all would be the history of the Italian Revolution. In fact, her reputation, such as it was in America, seemed to stand mainly on her conversation and oral lectures. If I wished anyone to do her justice, I should say, as I have indeed said, 'Never read what she has written.' The letters, however, are individual, and full, I should fancy, of that magnetic personal influence which was so strong in her. I felt drawn in towards her, during our short intercourse; I loved her, and the circumstances of her death shook me to the very roots of my heart. The comfort is, that she lost little in this world — the change could not be loss to her. She had suffered, and was likely to suffer still more.

And now, am I to tell you that I have seen George Sand twice, and am to see her again? Ah, there is no time to tell you, for I must shut up this letter. She sate, like a priestess, the other morning in a circle of eight or nine men, giving no oracles, except with her splendid eyes, sitting at the corner of the fire, and warming her feet quietly, in a general silence of the most profound deference. There was something in the calm disdain of it which pleased me, and

struck me as characteristic. She was George Sand, that was enough: you wanted no proof of it. Robert observed that 'if any other mistress of a house had behaved so, he would have walked out of the room'—but, as it was, no sort of incivility was meant. In fact, we hear that she 'likes us very much,' and as we went away she called me 'chère Madame' and kissed me, and desired to see us both again.

I did not read myself the passage in question from Miss M.'s book. I couldn't make up my mind, my courage, to look at it. But I understood from Robert.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 27, [1852].

I get your second letter, my dearest Mrs. Martin, before I answer your first, which makes me rather ashamed.

. . . Dearest friend, it is true that I have seldom been so upset as by this act of poor dear Miss Mitford's, and the very impossibility of being vindictive on this occasion increased my agitation at the moment. . . .

There are defects in delicacy and apprehensiveness, one cannot deny it, and yet I assure you that a more generous and fervent woman never lived than dear Miss Mitford is, and if you knew her you would do her this justice. She is better in herself than in her books—more large, more energetic, more human altogether. I think I understand her better on the whole than she understands me (which is not saying much), and I admire her on various accounts. She talks better, for instance, than most writers, male or female, whom I have had any intercourse with. And affectionate in the extreme, she has always been to me.

So I have mystified you and disgusted you with my politics, and my friends in England have put me in the corner; just so. . . .

The French nation is very peculiar. We choose to

boast ourselves of being different in England, but we have simply *les qualités de nos défauts* after all. The clash of speculative opinions is dreadful here, practical men catch at the ideal as if it were a loaf of bread, and they literally set about cutting out their Romeos 'into little stars,' as if that were the most natural thing in the world. As for the socialists, I quite agree with you that various of them, yes, and some of their chief men, are full of pure and noble aspiration, the most virtuous of men and the most benevolent. Still, they hold in their hands, in their clean hands, ideas that kill, ideas which defile, ideas which, if carried out, would be the worst and most crushing kind of despotism. I would rather live under the feet of the Czar than in those states of perfectibility imagined by Fourier and Cabet, if I might choose my 'pis aller.' All these speculators (even Louis Blanc, who is one of the most rational) would revolutionalise, not merely countries, but the elemental conditions of humanity, it seems to me; none of them seeing that antagonism is necessary to all progress. A man, in walking, must set one foot before another, and in climbing (as Dante observed long ago) the foot behind 'è sempre il più basso.' Only the gods (Plato tells us) keep both feet joined together in moving onward. It is not so, and cannot be so, with men.

But I think that not only in relation to the socialists, but to the monarchies, is L. N. the choice of the French people. I think that they will not *bear* the monarchies, they will not have either of them, they put them away. It seems to me that the French people is essentially democratical, and that by the vote in question they never meant to give away either rights or liberties. The extraordinary part of the actual position is that the Government, with these ugly signs of despotism in its face, stands upon the democracy (is no 'military despotism,' therefore, in any sense, as the English choose to say), and may be thrown, and will be thrown, on that day when it disappoints the popular

expectation. For my part, I am hopeful both for this reason and for others. I hope we shall do better, when there is greater calm; that presently there will be relaxation where there is stringency, and room to breathe and speak. At present it is a dictatorship, and we can't expect at such a time the ease and liberty of a regular government. The constitution itself may be modified, as the very terms of it imply, and the laws of the Press not carried out. Even as it is, all the English papers, infamous in their abuse of the Government (because of their falsifications and exaggerations properly called infamous) and highly immoral in their tone towards France generally, come in as usual, without an official finger being lifted up to hinder them. Louis Philippe would not admit Punch, you remember, on account of a few personal sarcasms. . . .

So much there is to say, and the post going. Can you read as I write on at a full gallop? Don't be out of heart. Do let us trust France — not L. Napoleon, but *France*. . . .

Dearest friends, think of me as your

Ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
April 7, 1852.

What a time seems to have passed since I wrote to you, my ever loved friend. Again and again I have been on the point of writing, and something has stopped me always. I have wished to wait till I had more about this and that to gossip of, and so the time went on. Now I am getting impatient to have news of you, and to learn whether the lovely spring has brought you any good yet as to health and strength. Don't take vengeance on my silence, but write, write. . . .

Yes, I want to see Béranger, and so does Robert. George Sand we came to know a great deal more of. I

think Robert saw her six times. Once he met her near the Tuileries, offered her his arm, and walked with her the whole length of the gardens. She was not on that occasion looking as well as usual, being a little too much 'endimanchée' in terrestrial lavenders and supercelestial blues — not, in fact, dressed with the remarkable taste which he has seen in her at other times. Her usual costume is both pretty and quiet, and the fashionable waistcoat and jacket (which are a spectacle in all the 'Ladies' Companions' of the day) make the only approach to masculine *wearings* to be observed in her. She has great nicety and refinement in her personal ways, I think, and the cigarette is really a feminine weapon if properly understood. Ah, but I didn't see her smoke. I was unfortunate. I could only go with Robert three times to her house, and once she was out. He was really very good and kind to let me go at all, after he found the sort of society rampant around her. He didn't like it extremely, but, being the prince of husbands, he was lenient to my desires and yielded the point. She seems to live in the abomination of desolation, as far as regards society — crowds of ill-bred men who adore her *à genoux bas*, betwixt a puff of smoke and an ejection of saliva. Society of the ragged Red diluted with the lower theatrical. She herself so different, so apart, as alone in her melancholy disdain! I was deeply interested in that poor woman, I felt a profound compassion for her. I did not mind much the Greek in Greek costume who tutoyéd her, and kissed her, I believe, so Robert said; or the other vulgar man of the theatre who went down on his knees and called her 'sublime.' 'Caprice d'amitié,' said she, with her quiet, gentle scorn. A noble woman under the mud, be certain. *I* would kneel down to her, too, if she would leave it all, throw it off, and be herself as God made her. But she would not care for my kneeling; she does not care for me. Perhaps she doesn't care for anybody by this time — who knows? She wrote one, or two, or three kind notes

to me, and promised to 'venir m'embrasser' before she left Paris; but she did not come. We both tried hard to please her, and she told a friend of ours that she 'liked us;' only we always felt that we couldn't penetrate — couldn't really *touch* her — it was all vain. Her play failed, though full of talent. It didn't draw, and was withdrawn accordingly. I wish she would keep to her romances, in which her real power lies.

We have found out Jadin, Alexandre Dumas' friend and companion in the '*Speronare*.' He showed Robert at his house poor Louis Philippe's famous 'umbrella,' and the Duke of Orleans' uniform, and the cup from which Napoleon took his coffee, which stood beside him as he signed the abdication. Then there was a picture of 'Milord' hanging up. I must go to see too. Said Robert: 'Then Alexandre Dumas doesn't write romances always.' (You know it was like a sudden spectacle of one of Leda's eggs.) 'Indeed,' replied Jadin, 'he wrote the true history of his own travels, only, of course, seeing everything, like a poet, from his own point of view.' Alfred De Musset was to have been at M. Buloz's, where Robert was a week ago, on purpose to meet him, but he was prevented in some way. His brother Paul De Musset, a very different person, was there instead — but we hope to have Alfred on another occasion. Do you know his poems? He is not capable of large grasps, but he has poet's life and blood in him, I assure you. He is said to be at the feet of Rachel just now, and a man may nearly as well be with a tigress in a cage. He began with the Princess Belgiojoso — followed George Sand — Rachel finishes, is likely to 'finish' in every sense. In the intervals, he plays at chess. There's the anatomy of a *man!*

We are expecting a visit from Lamartine, who does a great deal of honour to both of us, it appears, in the way of appreciation, and is kind enough to propose to come. I will tell you all about it.

But now tell *me*. Oh, I want so to hear how you are. Better, stronger, I hope and trust. How does the new house and garden look in the spring? Prettier and prettier, I dare say. . . .

The dotation of the President is enormous certainly, and I wish for his own sake it had been rather more moderate. Now I must end here. Post hour strikes. God bless you.

Do love me as much as you can, always, and think how I am your ever affectionate

BA.

Our darling is well; thank God.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
April 12, Monday, 1852.

Your letter was pleasant and not so pleasant, dearest Monna Nina; for it was not so pleasant indeed to hear how ill you had been — and yet to be lifted into the hope, or rather certainty, of seeing you next week pleased us extremely of course, and the more that your note through Lady Lyell had thrown us backward into a slough of despond and made me sceptical as to your coming here at all. . . .

What a beautiful Paris it is! I walked out a little yesterday with Robert, and we both felt penetrated with the sentiment of southern life as we watched men, women, and children sitting out in the sun, taking wine and coffee, and enjoying their *fête* day with good happy faces. The mixture of classes is to me one of the most delicious features of the South, and you have it here exactly as in Italy. The colouring too, the brightness, even the sun — oh, come and enjoy it all with us. We have had a most splendid spring, beginning with February. Still, I have been out very seldom, being afraid of treacherous winds combined with burning sunshine, but I have enjoyed the weather in the

house and by opening the windows, and had been revived and strengthened much by it, and shall soon recover my summer power of walking, I dare say. What do you think I did the other night? Went to the Vaudeville to see the 'Dame aux Camélias' on above the fiftieth night of the representation. I disagree with the common outcry about its immorality. According to my view, it is moral and human. But I never will go to see it again, for it almost broke my heart and split my head. I had a headache afterwards for twenty-four hours. Even Robert, who gives himself out for *blasé* on dramatic matters, couldn't keep the tears from rolling down his cheeks. The exquisite acting, the too literal truth to nature everywhere, was *exasperating* — there was something profane in such familiar handling of life and death. Art has no business with real graveclothes when she wants tragic drapery — has she? It was too much altogether like a bull fight. There's a caricature at the shop windows of the effect produced, the pit protecting itself with multitudinous umbrellas from the tears of the boxes. This play is by Alexandre Dumas *fils* — and is worthy by its talent of Alexandre Dumas *père*.

Only that once have I been in a Parisian theatre. I couldn't go even to see 'Les Vacances de Pandolphe' when George Sand had the goodness to send us tickets for the first night. She failed in it, I am sorry to say — it did not 'draw,' as the phrase is. Now she has left Paris, but is likely to return.

I am sure it will do you great good to have change and liberty and distraction in various ways. The 'anxiety' you speak of — oh, I do hope it does not relate to Gerardine. I always think of her when you seem anxious.

I shall be very glad if, when you come, you should be inclined to give your attention, you with your honest and vigorous mind, to the facts of the political situation, not the facts as you hear them from the English, or from our friend Ma^dme^ Mohl, who confessed to me one day that

she liked exaggerations because she hated the President. She is a clever shrewd woman, but most eminently and on all subjects a woman; her passions having her thoughts inside them, instead of her thoughts her passions. That's the common distinction between women and men, is it not?

Robert, too, will tell you that he hates all Buonapartes, past, present, or to come, but then *he* says *that* in his self-willed, pettish way, as a manner of dismissing a subject he won't think about — and knowing very well that he doesn't think about it, not mistaking a feeling for a reason, not for a moment. There's the difference between women and men.

Well, but you won't come here to knit your brows about politics, but rather to forget all sorts of anxieties and distresses, and be well and happy, I do hope. You deserve a holiday after all that work. God bless you, dear friend.

Our united love goes to you and stays with you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mulock

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
April 27, [1852].

I am afraid you must think me — what can you have thought of me for not immediately answering a letter which brought the tears both to my eyes and my husband's? I was going to write just *so*, but he said: 'No, do not write yet; wait till we get the book and then you can speak of it with knowledge.' And I waited.

But the misfortune is that Messrs. Chapman & Hall waited too, and that up to the present time 'The Head of the Family' has not arrived. Mr. Chapman is slow in finding what he calls his opportunities.

Therefore I can't wait any more, no indeed. The voice which called 'Dinah' in the garden — which was true, because certainly I did call from Florence with my whole heart to the writer of these verses[1] (how deeply they moved me!) — will have seemed to you by this time as fabulous as the garden itself. And we had no garden at Florence, I must confess to you, only a terrace facing the grey wall of San Felice church, where we used to walk up and down on the moonlight nights. But San Felice was always a good saint to me, and when I had read and cried over those verses from the 'Athenæum' (my husband wrote them out for me at the reading room) and when I had vainly written to England to find out the poet, and when I had all as vainly, on our visit to England last summer, inquired of this person and that person, it turns out after all that 'Dinah' answers me. Do you not think I am glad?

The beautiful verses touched me to the quick, so does your letter. We shall be in London again perhaps in two months for a few weeks, and then you will let us see you, I hope, will you not? And, in the meanwhile, you will believe that we do not indeed think of you as a stranger. Ah, your dream flattered me in certain respects! Yet there was some truth in it, as I have told you, even though you saw in the dreamlight more roses than were growing.

Certainly Mr. Chapman will at last send me 'The Head of the Family,' and then I will write again of course.

Dear Miss Mulock, may I write myself down now, because I *must*.

Affectionately yours and gratefully,
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[1] 'Lines to Elizabeth Barrett Browning on her Later Sonnets,' printed in the *Athenæum* for February 15, 1851. The allusion to the voice which called 'Dinah' must refer to something in Miss Mulock's letter. Dinah was Miss Mulock's Christian name.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
May 9, [1852].

I began a long letter to you in the impulse left by yours upon me, and then destroyed it by accident. That hindered me from writing as soon as I should have done, for indeed I am anxious to have other news of you, my dearest dear Miss Mitford, and to know, if possible, that you are a little better. . . . Tell me everything. Why, you looked really well last summer; and I want to see you looking well this summer, for we shall probably be in London in June — more's the pity, perhaps! The gladness I have in England is so leavened through and through with sadness that I incline to do with it as one does with the black bread of the monks of Vallombrosa, only pretend to eat it and drop it slyly under the table. If it were not for some ties I would say 'Farewell, England,' and never set foot on it again. There's always an east wind for *me* in England, whether the sun shines or not — the moral east wind which is colder than any other. But how dull to go on talking of the weather: *Sia come vuole*, as we say in Italy.

To-morrow is the great *fête* of your Louis Napoleon, the distribution of the eagles. We have done our possible and impossible to get tickets, because I had taken strongly into my head to want to go, and because Robert, who didn't care for it himself, cared for it for me; but here's the eleventh hour and our prospects remain gloomy. We did not apply sufficiently soon, I am afraid, and the name of the applicants have been legion. It will be a grand sight, and full of significances. Nevertheless, the empire won't come *so;* you will have to wait a little for the empire. Who were your financial authorities who praised Louis Napoleon? and do the same approve of the late measure about the three per cents.? I am so absolutely *bête* upon such subjects that I

don't even *pretend* to be intelligent; but I heard yesterday from a direct source that Rothschild expressed a high admiration of the President's financial ability. A friend of that master in Israel said it to our friend Lady Elgin. Commerce is reviving, money is pouring in, confidence is being restored on all sides. Even the Press palpitates again—ah, but I wish it were a little freer of the corset. This Government is not after my heart after all. I only tolerate what appear to me the necessities of an exceptional situation. The masses are satisfied and hopeful, and the President stronger and stronger—not by the sword, may it please the English Press, but by the democracy.

I am delighted to see that the French Government has protested against the reactionary iniquities of the Tuscan Grand Duke, and every day I expect eagerly some helping hand to be stretched out to Rome. I have looked for this from the very first, and certainly it is significant that the prince of Canino, the late President of the Roman republic, should be in favour at the Elysée. Pio Nono's time is but short, I fancy—that is, reforms will be forced upon him.

When George Sand had audience with the President, he was very kind; did I tell you that? At the last he said: 'Vous verrez, vous serez contente de moi.' To which she answered, 'Et vous, vous serez content de moi.' It was repeated to me as to the great dishonour of Madame Sand, and as a proof that she could not resist the influence of power and was a bad republican. I, on the contrary, thought the story quite honourable to both parties. It was for the sake of her *rouge* friends that she approached the President at all, and she has used the hand he stretched out to her only on behalf of persons in prison and distress. The same, being delivered, call her gratefully a recreant.

Victor Cousin and Villemain refuse to take the oath, and lose their situations in the Academy accordingly; but they retire on pensions, and it's their own fault of course.

Michelet and Quinet should have an equivalent, I think, for what they have lost; they are worthy, as poets, orators, dreamers, speculative thinkers — as anything, in fact, but instructors of youth.

No, there is a brochure, or a little book somewhere, pretending to be a memoir of Balzac, but I have not seen it. Some time before his death he had bought a country place, and there was a fruit tree in the garden — I think a walnut tree — about which he delighted himself in making various financial calculations after the manner of César Birotteau. He built the house himself, and when it was finished there was just one defect — it wanted a staircase. They had to put in the staircase afterwards. The picture gallery, however, had been seen to from the first, and the great writer had chalked on the walls, 'Mon Raffaelle,' 'Mon Corregge,' 'Mon Titien,' 'Mon Leonarde de Vince,' the pictures being yet unattained. He is said to have been a little loth to spend money, and to have liked to dine magnificently at the restaurant at the expense of his friends, forgetting to pay for his own share of the entertainment. For the rest, the 'idée fixe' of the man was to be rich one day, and he threw his subtle imagination and vital poetry into pounds, shillings, and pence with such force that he worked the base element into spiritual splendours. Oh! to think of our having missed seeing that man. It is painful. A little book is published of his 'thoughts and maxims,' the sweepings of his desk I suppose; broken notes, probably, which would have been wrought up into some noble works, if he had lived. Some of these are very striking.

Lamartine has not yet paid us the promised visit. Just as we were beginning to feel vexed we heard that the intermediate friend who was to have brought him had been caught up by the Government and sent off to Saint-Germain to 'faire le mort,' on pain of being sent farther. I mean Eugène Belleton. If he talked in many places as he talked

in this room, I can't be very much surprised, but I am really very sorry. He is one of those amiable domestic men who delight in talking 'battle, murder, and sudden death.'

[*The end of this letter is wanting.*]

To Miss Mulock

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
June 2, [1852].

My husband went directly to Rue Vivienne and came back without the book. We waited and waited, but at last it reached us, and we have read it, and since then I have let some days go by through having been unwell. You seemed to let me sit still in my chair and do nothing; you did not call too loud. So was it with most other things in the universe. Now, having awakened from my somnolency, recovered from 'La Grippe' (or what mortal Londoners call the influenza), the first person and first book I think of must naturally be you and yours.

So I thank you much, much, for the book. It has interested me, dear Miss Mulock, as a book should, and I am delighted to recognise everywhere undeniable talent and faculty, combined with high and pure aspiration. A clever book, a graceful book, and with the moral grace besides — thank you. Many must have thanked you as well as myself.

At the same time, precisely because I feel particularly obliged to you, I mean to tell you the truth. Your hero is heroic from his own point of view — accepting his own view of the situation, which I, for one, cannot accept, do you know, for I am of opinion that both you and he are rather conventional on the subject of his marriage. I don't in the least understand, at this moment, why he should not have married in the first volume; no, not in the least. It was a matter of income, he would tell me, and of keeping two establishments; and I would answer that it ought

rather to have been a matter of faith in God and in the value of God's gifts, the greatest of which is love. I am romantic about love — oh, much more than you are, though older than you. A man's life does not develop rightly without it, and what is called an 'improvident marriage' often appears to me a noble, righteous, and prudent act. Your Ninian was a man before he was a brother. I hold that he had no right to sacrifice a great spiritual good of his own to the worldly good of his family, however he made it out. He should have said: 'God gives me this gift, He will find me energy to work for it and suffer for it. We will all live together, struggle together if it is necessary, a little more poorly, a little more laboriously, but keeping true to the best aims of life, all of us.'

That's what *my* Ninian would have said. I don't like to see noble Ninians crushed flat under family Juggernauts, from whatever heroic motives — not I. Do you forgive me for being so candid?

I must tell you that Mrs. Jameson, who is staying in this house, read your book in England and mentioned it to me as a good book, 'very gracefully written,' before I read it, quite irrespectively, too, of my dedication, which was absent from the copy she saw at Brighton. It was mentioned as one of the novels which had pleased her most lately.

I shall like to show you my child, as you like children, and as I am vain — oh, past endurance vain, about him. You won't understand a word he says, though, for he speaks three languages at once, and most of the syllables of each wrong side foremost.

No, don't call me a Bonapartist. I am not a Bonapartist indeed. But I am a Democrat and singularly (in these days) consequent about universal suffrage. Also, facts in England have been much mis-stated; but there's no room for politics to-day.

When I thank you, remember that my husband thanks

you. We both hope to see you before this month shall be quite at an end, and then you will know me better, I hope; and though I shall lose a great deal by your knowing me, of course, yet you won't, *after that*, make such mistakes as you 'confess' in this note which I have just read over again. Did I think you 'sentimental'? Won't you rather think *me* sentimental to-day? Through it all,

Your affectionate

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
June 16, [1852].

My first word must be to thank you, my dearest kind friend, for your affectionate words to me and mine, which always, from you, sink deeply. It was, on my part, great gratification to see you and talk to you and hear you talk, and, above all, perhaps, to feel that you loved me still a little. May God bless you both! And may we meet again and again in Paris and elsewhere; in London this summer to begin with! As the Italians would say in relation to any like pleasure: 'Sarebbe una *benedizione*.'

We are waiting for the English weather to be reported endurable in order to set out. Mrs. Streatfield, who has been in England these twelve days, writes to certify that it is past the force of a Parisian imagination to imagine the state of the skies and the atmosphere; yet, even in Paris, we have been moaning the last four days, because really, since then, we have gone back to April, and a rather cool April, with alternate showers and sunshine — a crisis, however, which does not call for fires, nor inflict much harm on me. It was the thunder, we think, that upset the summer.

You seem to have had a sort of inkling about my brittleness when you were here. It was the beginning of a bad attack of cough and pain in the side, the consequence of

which was that I turned suddenly into the likeness of a ghost and frightened Robert from his design of going to England. About that I am by no means regretful; he was not wanted, as the event proved abundantly. The worst was that he was annoyed by the number of judicious observers and miserable comforters who told him I was horribly changed and ought to be taken back to Italy forthwith. I knew it was nothing but an accidental attack, and that the results would pass away, as they did. I kept quiet, applied mustard poultices, and am now looking again (tell dear Mr. Martin) 'as if I had shammed.' So all these misfortunes are strictly historical, you are to understand. To-night we are going to Ary Scheffer's to hear music and to see ever so many celebrities. Oh, and let me remember to tell you that M. Thierry, the blind historian, has sent us a message by his physician to ask us to go to see him, and as a matter of course we go. Madame Viardot, the prima donna, and Leonard, the first violin player at the Conservatoire, are to be at M. Scheffer's.

After all, you are too right. The less amused I am, clearly the better for me. I should live ever so many years more by being shut up in a hermitage, if it were warm and dry. More's the pity, when one wants to see and hear as I do. The only sort of excitement and fatigue which does me no harm, but good, is *travelling*. The effect of the continual change of air is to pour in oil as the lamp burns; so I explain the extraordinary manner in which I bear the fatigue of being four-and-twenty hours together in a diligence, for instance, which many strong women would feel too much for them.

All this talking of myself when I want to talk of you and to tell you how touched I was by the praises of your winning little Letitia! Enclosed is a note to Chapman & Hall which will put her 'bearer' (if she can find one in London) in possession of the two volumes in question. I shall like her to have them, and she must try to find my

love, as the King of France did the poison (a 'most unsavoury simile,' certainly), between the leaves. I send with them, in any case, my best love. Ah, so sorry I am that she has suffered from the weather you have had. She is a most interesting child, and of a nature which is rare. . . .

Robert's warm regards, with those of your

Ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Madame Viardot is George Sand's heroine Consuelo. You know that beautiful book.

With the last days of June the long stay in Paris came to an end, and the Brownings paid their second visit to London. Their residence on this occasion was at 58 Welbeck Street ('very respectable rooms this time, and at a moderate price'), and here they stayed until the beginning of November. Neither husband nor wife seems to have written much poetry during this year, either in Paris or in London.

To Miss Mitford

[London,] 58 Welbeck Street: Saturday, [June–July 1852].

. . . . We saw your book in Paris, the Galignani edition, and I read it all except the one thing I had not courage to read. Thank you, thank you. We are both of us grateful to you for your most generous and heartwarm intentions to us. As to the book, it's a book made to go east and west; it's a popular book with flowers from the 'village' laid freshly and brightly between the critical leaves. I don't always agree with you. I think, for instance, that Mary Anne Browne should never be compared to George Sand in 'passion,' and I can't grant to you that your extracts from her poems bear you out to even one fiftieth degree in such an opinion. I agree with you just as

little with regard to Dr. Holmes and certain others. But to *have* your opinion is always a delightful thing, and 'it is characteristic of your generosity,' to say the least, we say to ourselves when we are 'dissidents' most.

I am writing in the extremest haste, just a word to announce our arrival in England. We are in very comfortable rooms in 58 Welbeck Street, and my sister Henrietta is some twenty doors away. To-morrow Robert and I are going to Wimbledon for a day to dear Mr. Kenyon, who looks radiantly well and has Mr. Landor for a companion just now. Imagine the uproar and turmoil of our first days in London, and believe that I think of you faithfully and tenderly through all. I am overjoyed to see my sisters, who look well on the whole . . . and they and everybody assure me that I show a very satisfactory face to my country, as far as improved looks go.

What nonsense one writes when one has but a moment to write in. I find people talking about the 'facts in the "Times"' touching Louis Napoleon. Facts in the 'Times'!

The heat is *stifling*. Do send one word to say how you are, and love me always as I love you.

Your most affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street: Friday, July 31, 1852 [postmark].

I want to hear about you again, dear, dearest Miss Mitford, and I can't hear. Will you send me a line or a word. . . . I mean to go down to see you one day, but certainly we must account it right not to tire you while you are weak, and not to spoil our enjoyment by forestalling it. Two months are full of days; we can afford to wait. Meantime let us have a little gossip such as the gods allow of.

Dear Mr. Kenyon has not yet gone to Scotland, though his intentions still stand north. He passed an evening with us some evenings ago, and was brilliant and charming (the

two things together), and good and affectionate at the same time. Mr. Landor was staying with him (perhaps I told you that), and went away into Worcestershire, assuring me, when he took leave of me, that he would never enter London again. A week passes, and lo! Mr. Kenyon expects him again. Resolutions are not always irrevocable, you observe.

I must tell you what Landor said about Louis Napoleon. You are aware that he loathed the first Napoleon and that he hates the French nation; also, he detests the present state of French affairs, and has foamed over in the 'Examiner' 'in prose and rhyme' on that subject of them. Nevertheless, he who calls 'the Emperor' 'an infernal fool' expresses himself to this effect about the President: 'I always knew him to be a man of wonderful genius. I knew him intimately, and I was persuaded of what was in him. When people have said to me, "How can you like to waste your time with so trifling a man?" I have answered: "If all your Houses of Parliament, putting their heads together, could make a head equal to this trifling man's head it would be well for England."'

It was quite unexpected to me to hear Mr. Landor talk so.

He, Mr. Landor, is looking as young as ever, as full of life and passionate energy.

Did Mr. Horne write to you before he went to Australia? Did I speak to you about his going? Did you see the letter which he put into the papers as a farewell to England? I think of it all sadly.

Mazzini came to see us the other day, with that pale spiritual face of his, and those intense eyes full of melancholy illusions. I was thinking, while he sate there, on what Italian turf he would lie at last with a bullet in his heart, or perhaps with a knife in his back, for to one of those ends it will surely come. Mrs. Carlyle came with him. She is a great favorite of mine: full of thought, and feeling, and character, it seems to me.

London is emptying itself, and the relief will be great in a certain way; for one gets exhausted sometimes. Let me remember whom I have seen. Mrs. Newton Crosland, who spoke of you very warmly; Miss Mulock, who wrote 'The Ogilvies' (that series of novels), and is interesting, gentle, and young, and seems to have worked half her life in spite of youth; Mr. Field we have not seen, only heard of; Miss ——, no — but I am to see her, I understand, and that she is an American Corinna in yellow silk, but pretty. We drove out to Kensington with Monckton Milnes and his wife, and I like her; she is quiet and kind, and seems to have accomplishments, and we are to meet Fanny Kemble at the Procters' some day next week. Many good faces, but the best wanting. Ah, I wish Lord Stanhope, who shows the spirits of the sun in a crystal ball, could show us *that!* Have you heard of the crystal ball?[1] We went to meet it and the seer the other morning, with sundry of the believers and unbelievers — among the latter, chief among the latter, Mr. Chorley, who was highly indignant and greatly scandalised, particularly on account of the combination sought to be established by the lady of the house between lobster salad and Oremus, spirit of the sun. For my part, I endured both luncheon and spiritual phenomena with great equanimity. It was very curious altogether to my mind, as a sign of the times, if in no other respect of philosophy. But I love the marvellous. Write a word to me, I beseech you, and love me and think of me, as I love and think of you. God bless you. Robert's love.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

[1] In another letter, written about the same date to Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Browning says: 'Perhaps you never heard of the crystal ball. The original ball was bought by Lady Blessington from an "Egyptian magician," and resold at her sale. She never could understand the use of it, but others have looked deeper, or with purer eyes, it is said; and now there is an optician in London who makes and sells these

To Mrs. Jameson

58 Welbeck Street: Tuesday, [July–October 1852].

Dearest Monna Nina, — Here are the verses. I did them all because that was easiest to me, but of course you will extract the two you want.

It has struck me besides that you might care to see this old ballad which I find among my papers from one of the Percy or other antiquarian Society books, and which I transcribed years ago, modernising slightly in order to make out some sort of rhythm as I went on. I did this because the original poem impressed me deeply with its pathos. I wish I could send you the antique literal poem, but I haven't it, nor know where to find it; still, I don't think I quite spoilt it with the very slight changes ventured by me in the transcription.

God bless you. Let us meet on Wednesday. Robert's best love, with that of your ever affectionate

BA.

STABAT MATER

Mother full of lamentation,
Near that cross she wept her passion,
 Whereon hung her child and Lord.
Through her spirit worn and wailing,
Tortured by the stroke and failing,
 Passed and pierced the prophet's sword.

Oh, sad, sore, above all other,
Was that ever blessed mother
 Of the sole-begotten one;
She who mourned and moaned and trembled
While she measured, nor dissembled,
 Such despairs of such a son!

balls, and speaks of a "great demand," though they are expensive. "Many persons," said Lord Stanhope, "use the balls, without the moral courage to confess it."' No doubt they did.

Where's the man could hold from weeping,
If Christ's mother he saw keeping
 Watch with mother-heart undone?
Who could hold from grief, to view her,
Tender mother true and pure,
 Agonising with her Son?

For her people's sins she saw Him
Down the bitter deep withdraw Him
 'Neath the scourge and through the dole!
Her sweet Son she contemplated
Nailed to death, and desolated,
 While He breathed away His soul.

E. B. B.

BALLAD — *Beginning of Edward II.'s Reign*

'Stand up, mother, under cross,
Smile to help thy Son at loss.
 Blythe, O mother, try to be!'
'Son, how can I blythely stand,
Seeing here Thy foot and hand
 Nailèd to the cruel tree?'

'Mother, cease thy weeping blind.
I die here for all mankind,
 Not for guilt that I have done.'
'Son, I feel Thy deathly smart.
The sword pierces through my heart,
 Prophesied by Simeon.'

'Mother, mercy! let me die,
Adam out of hell to buy,
 And his kin who are accurst.'
'Son, what use have I for breath?
Sorrow wasteth me to death —
 Let my dying come the first.'

'Mother, pity on thy Son!
Bloody tears be running down
 Worse to bear than death to meet!'
'Son, how can I cease from weeping?
Bloody streams I see a-creeping
 From Thine heart against my feet.'

'Mother, now I tell thee, I!
Better is it one should die
Than all men to hell should go.'
'Son, I see Thy body hang
Foot and hand in piercèd pang.
Who can wonder at my woe?'

'Mother, now I will thee tell,
If I live, thou goest to hell —
I must die here for thy sake.'
'Son, Thou art so mild and kind,
Nature, knowledge have enjoined
I, for Thee, this wail must make.'

'Mother, ponder now this thing:
Sorrow childbirth still must bring,
Sorrow 'tis to have a son!'
'Ay, still sorrow, I can tell!
Mete it by the pain of hell,
Since more sorrow can be none.'

'Mother, pity mother's care!
Now as mother dost thou fare,
Though of maids the purest known.'
'Son, Thou help at every need
All those who before me plead —
Maid, wife — woman, everyone.'

'Mother, here I cannot dwell.
Time is that I pass to hell,
And the third day rise again.'
'Son, I would depart with Thee.
Lo! Thy wounds are slaying me.
Death has no such sorrow — none.'

When He rose, then fell her sorrow.
Sprang her bliss on the third morrow.
A blythe mother wert thou so!
Lady, for that selfsame bliss,
Pray thy Son who peerless is,
Be our shield against our foe.

Blessed be thou, full of bliss!
Let us not heaven's safety miss,
Never! through thy sweet Son's might.
Jesus, for that selfsame blood
Which Thou sheddest upon rood,
Bring us to the heavenly light.

To Mrs. Martin

58 Welbeck Street: Thursday, [September 2, 1852].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Your letters always make me glad to see them, but this time the pleasure was tempered by an undeniable pain in the conscience. Oh, I ought to have written long and long ago. I have another letter of yours unanswered. Also, there was a proposition in it to Robert of a tempting character, and he put off the 'no' — the ungracious-sounding 'no' — as long as he could. He would have liked to have seen Mrs. Flood, as well as you; she is a favorite with us both. But he finds it impossible to leave London. We have had no less than eight invitations into the country, and we are forced to keep to London, in spite of all 'babbling about' and from 'green fields.' Once we went to Farnham, and spent two days with Mr. and Mrs. Paine there in that lovely heathy country, and met Mr. Kingsley, the 'Christian Socialist,' author of 'Alton Locke,' 'Yeast,' &c. It is only two hours from town (or less) by railroad, and we took our child with us and Flush, and had a breath of fresh air which ought to have done us good, but didn't. Few men have impressed me more agreeably than Mr. Kingsley. He is original and earnest, and full of a genial and almost tender kindliness which is delightful to me. Wild and theoretical in many ways he is of course, but I believe he could not be otherwise than good and noble, let him say or dream what he will. You are not to confound this visit of ours to Farnham with the 'sanitary reform' picnic (!) to the same place, at which the newspapers say we were present. We were *invited*

— that is true — but did not go, nor thought of it. I am not up to picnics — nor *down* to some of the company perhaps; who knows? Don't think me grown, too, suddenly scornful, without being sure of the particulars. . . .

Mr. Tennyson has a little son, and wrote me such three happy notes on the occasion that I really never liked him so well before. I do like men who are not ashamed to be happy beside a cradle. Monckton Milnes had a brilliant christening luncheon, and his baby was made to sweep in India muslin and Brussels lace among a very large circle of admiring guests. Think of my vanity turning my head completely and admitting of my taking Wiedeman there (because of an express invitation). He behaved like an angel, everybody said, and looked very pretty, I said myself; only he disgraced us all at last by refusing to kiss the baby, on the ground of his being 'troppo grande.' He has learnt quantities of English words, and is in consequence more unintelligible than ever. Poor darling! I am in pain about him to-day. Wilson goes to spend a fortnight with her mother, and I don't know how I shall be comforter enough. There will be great wailing and gnashing of teeth certainly, and I shall be in prison for the next two weeks, and have to do all the washing and dressing myself. . . .

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street:
Saturday, September 14, 1852 [postmark].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I am tied and bound beyond redemption for the next fortnight at least, therefore the hope of seeing you must be for *afterwards*. I dare say you think that a child can be stowed away like other goods; but I do assure you that my child, though quite capable of

being amused by his aunts for a certain number of half-hours, would break his little heart if I left him for a whole day while he had not Wilson. When she is here, he is contented. In her absence he is sceptical about happiness, and suspicious of complete desolation. Every now and then he says to me, 'Will mama' (saying it in his pretty, broken, unquotable language) 'go away and leave Peninni all alone?' He won't let a human being touch him. I wash and dress him, and have him to sleep with me, and Robert is the only other helper he will allow of. 'There's spoiling of a child!' say you. But he is so good and tender and sensitive that we can't go beyond a certain line. For instance, I was quite frightened about the effect of Wilson's leaving him. We managed to prepare him as well as we could, and when he found she was actually gone, the passion of grief I had feared was just escaped. He struggled with himself, the eyes full of tears, and the lips quivering, but there was not any screaming and crying such as made me cry last year on a like occasion. He had made up his mind.

You see I can't go to you just now, whatever temptations you hold out. Wait — oh, we must wait. And whenever I do go to you, you will see Robert at the same time. He will like to see *you;* and besides, he would as soon trust me to travel to Reading alone as *I* trust Peninni to be alone here. I believe he thinks I should drop off my head and leave it under the seat of the rail-carriage if he didn't take care of it. . . .

I ought to have told you that Mr. Kingsley (one of the reasons why I liked him) spoke warmly and admiringly of you. Yes, I ought to have told you that — his praise is worth having. Of course I have heard much of Mr. Harness from Mr. Kenyon and you, as well as from my own husband. But there is no use in measuring temptations; I am a female St. Anthony, and *won't* be overcome. The Talfourds wanted me to dine with them

on Monday. Robert goes alone. You don't mention Mr. Chorley. Didn't he find his way to you?

Mr. Patmore told us that Tennyson was writing a poem on Arthur — *not* an epic, a collection of poems, ballad and otherwise, united by the subject, after the manner of 'In Memoriam,' but in different measures. The work will be full of beauty, whatever it is, I don't doubt.

I am reading more Dumas. He never flags. I *must* see Dumas when I go again to Paris, and it will be easy, as we know his friend Jadin.

Did you read Mrs. Norton's last book — the novel, which seems to be so much praised? Tell me what it is, in your mind. . . .

I will write no more, that you may have the answer to my kind proposition as soon as possible. *After the fortnight.*

God bless you.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street: Tuesday, [September 1852].

Alas, no; I cannot go to you before the Saturday you name, nor for some days after, dearest friend. It is simply impossible. Wilson has not come back, nor will till the end of next week, and though I can get away from my child for two or three hours at once during the daytime, for the whole day I could not go. What would become of him, poor darling? . . .

And I can't go to you this week, nor next week, probably. How vexatious! My comfort is that you seem to be better — much, much better — and that you have courage to think of the pony carriages and the Kingsleys of the earth. That man impressed me much, interested me much. The more you see of him, the more you will like him, is my prophecy. He has a volume of poems, I hear, close upon

publication, and Robert and I are looking forward to it eagerly.

Mr. Ruskin has been to see us (did I tell you that?).... We went to Denmark Hill yesterday by agreement to see the Turners — which, by the way, are divine. I like Mr. Ruskin much, and so does Robert. Very gentle, yet earnest — refined and truthful. I like him very much. We count him among the valuable acquaintances made this year in England. . . .

Mr. Kenyon has come back, and most other people are gone away; but he is worth more than most other people, so the advantage remains to the scale. I am delighted that you should have your dear friend Mr. Harness with you, and, for my own part, I do feel grateful to him for the good he has evidently done you. Oh, continue to be better! Don't overtire yourself — don't use improvidently the new strength. Remember the winter, and be wise; and let me see you, before it comes, looking as bright and well as I thought you last year. God bless you always.

Love your ever affectionate

Robert's love. BA.

To Miss Mitford

London: Friday, [October 6, 1852].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I am quite in pain to have to write a farewell to you after all. As soon as Wilson had returned — and she stayed away much longer than last year — we found ourselves pushed to the edge of our time for remaining in England, and the accumulation of business to be done before we could go pressed on us. I am almost mad with the amount of things to be done, as it is; but I should have put the visit to you at the head of them, and swept all the rest on one side for a day, if it hadn't been for the detestable weather, and my horrible cough which combines with it. When Wilson came back she found me coughing in my old way, and it has been without inter-

mission up to now, or rather waxing worse and worse. To have gone down to you and inflicted the noise of it on you would have simply made you nervous, while the risk to myself would have been very great indeed. Still, I have waited and waited, feeling it scarcely possible to write to you to say, 'I am not coming this year.' Ah, I am so very sorry and disappointed! I hoped against hope for a break in the weather, and an improvement in myself; now we must go, and there is no hope. For about a fortnight I have been a prisoner in the house. This climate won't let me live, there's the truth. So we are going on Monday. We go to Paris for a week or two, and then to Florence, and then to Rome, and then to Naples; but we shall be back next year, if God pleases, and then I shall seize an early summer day to run down straight to you and find you stronger, if God blesses me so far. Think of me and love me a little meanwhile. I shall do it by you. And do, *do*—since there is no time to hear from you in London—send a fragment of a note to Arabel for me, that I may have it in Paris before we set out on our long Italian journey. Let me have the comfort of knowing exactly how you are before we set out. As for me, I expect to be better on crossing the Channel. How people manage to live and enjoy life in this fog and cold is inexplicable to me. I understand the system of the American rapping spirits considerably better. . . .

The Tennysons in their kindest words pressed us to be present at their child's christening, which took place last Tuesday, but I could not go; it was not possible. Robert went alone, therefore, and nursed the baby for ten or twelve minutes, to its obvious contentment, he flatters himself. It was christened Hallam Tennyson. Mr. Hallam was the godfather, and present in his vocation. That was touching, wasn't it? I hear that the Laureate talks vehemently against the French President and the French; but for the rest he is genial and good, and has been quite affectionate to us. . . .

So I go without seeing you. Grieved I am. Love me to make amends.

Robert's love goes with me.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

[Paris,] Hôtel de la Ville l'Évêque, Rue Ville l'Évêque: Thursday, [November 1852].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — I cannot do better to-day than keep my promise to you about writing. We have done our business in Paris, but we linger from the inglorious reason that we, experienced travellers as we are, actually left a desk behind us in Bentinck Street, and must get it before we go farther. Meanwhile, it's rather dangerous to let the charm of Paris work — the honey will be clogging our feet very soon, and make it difficult to go away. What an attractive place this is, to be sure! How the sun shines, how the blue sky spreads, how the life lives, and how kind the people are on all sides! If we were going anywhere but to Italy, and if I were a little less plainly mortal with this disagreeable cough of mine, I would gladly stay and see in the Empire with M. Proudhon in the tail of it, and sit as a watcher over whatever things shall be this year and next spring at Paris. As it is, we have been very fortunate, as usual, in being present in a balcony on the boulevard, the best place possible for seeing the grandest spectacle in the world, the reception of Louis Napoleon last Saturday. The day was brilliant, and the sweep of sunshine over the streaming multitude, and all the military and civil pomp, made it difficult to distinguish between the light and life. The sunshine seemed literally to push back the houses to make room for the crowd, and the wide boulevards looked wider than ever. If you had cursed the sentiment of the day ever so, you would have had eyes for its picturesqueness, I think, so I wish you had been there to see. Louis

Napoleon showed his usual tact and courage by riding on horseback quite alone, at least ten paces between himself and his nearest escort, which of course had a striking effect, taking the French on their weak side, and startling even Miss Cushman (who had been murmuring displeasure into my ear for an hour) into an exclamation of 'That's fine, I must say.' Little Wiedeman was in a state of ecstasy, and has been recounting ever since how he called '"Vive Napoleon!" *molto molto duro*,' meaning *very loud* (his Italian is not very much more correct, you know, than his other languages), and how Napoleon took off his hat to him directly. I don't see the English papers, but I conclude you are all furious. You must make up your minds to it nevertheless — the Empire is certain, and the feeling of all but unanimity (whatever the motive) throughout France obvious enough. Smooth down the lion's mane of the 'Examiner,' and hint that roaring over a desert is a vain thing. As to Victor Hugo's book, the very enemies of the present state of affairs object to it that *he lies* simply. There is not enough truth in it for an invective to rest on, still less for an argument. It's an inarticulate cry of a bird of prey, wild and strong — irrational, and not a book at all. For my part I did wave my handkerchief for the new Emperor, but I bore the show very well, and said to myself, 'God bless the people!' as the man who, to my apprehension, represents the democracy, went past. A very intelligent Frenchman, caught in the crowd and forced to grope his way slowly along, told me that the expression of opinion everywhere was curiously the same, not a dissenting mutter did he hear. Strange, strange, all this! For the drama of history we must look to France, for startling situations, for the 'points' which thrill you to the bone. . . .

May God bless you meantime. Take care of yourself for the sake of us all who love you, none indeed more affectionately and gratefully than

R. B. and E. B. B.

CHAPTER VIII

1852–1855

THE middle of November found the travellers back again in Florence, and it was nearly three years before they again quitted Italy. No doubt, after the excitement of the *coup d'état* in Paris, and the subsequent manœuvres of Louis Napoleon, which culminated in this very month in his exchanging the title of President for that of Emperor, Florence must have seemed very quiet, if not dull. The political movement there was dead; the Grand Duke, restored by Austrian bayonets, had abandoned all pretence at reform and constitutional progress. In Piedmont, Cavour had just been summoned to the head of the administration, but there were no signs as yet of the use he was destined to make of his power. Of politics, therefore, we hear little for the present.

Nor is there much to note at this time in respect of literature. A new edition of Mrs. Browning's poems was called for in 1853; but beyond some minor revisions of detail it did not differ from the edition of 1850. Her husband's play, 'Colombe's Birthday,' was produced at the Haymarket Theatre during April, with Miss Faucit (Lady Martin) in the principal part; but the poet had no share in the production, and his literary activity must have been devoted to the composition of some of the fine poems which subsequently formed the two volumes of 'Men and Women,' which appeared in 1855. Mrs. Browning had also embarked on her longest poem, 'Aurora Leigh,' and speaks

of being happily and busily engaged in work; but we hear little of it as yet in her correspondence. Her little son and her Florentine friends and visitors form her principal subjects; and we also see the beginning of a topic which for the next few years occupied a good deal of her attention — namely, Spiritualism.

The temperament of Mrs. Browning had in it a decidedly mystical vein, which predisposed her to believe in any communication between our world and that of the spirits. Hence when a number of people professed to have such communication, she was not merely ready to listen to their claims, but was by temperament inclined to accept them. The immense vogue which spiritualism had during 'the fifties' tended to confirm her belief. It was easy to say that where there was so much smoke there must be fire. And what she believed, she believed strongly and with a perfect conviction that no other view could be right. Just as her faith in Louis Napoleon survived the *coup d'état*, and even Villafranca, so her belief in communications with the spirit world was proof against any exposure of fraud on the part of the mediums. Not that she was guilty of the absurdities which marked many of the devotees of spiritualism. She had a great horror of submitting herself to mesmeric influences. She recognised that very many of the supposed revelations of the spirits were trivial, perhaps false; but to the fact that communications did exist she adhered constantly.

It is not of much interest now to discuss the ethics or the metaphysics of the 'rapping spirits;' but the subject deserves more than a passing mention in the life of Mrs. Browning, because it has been said, and apparently with authority, that 'the only serious difference which ever arose between Mr. Browning and his wife referred to the subject of spiritualism.'[1] It is quite certain that Mr. Browning did

[1] *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, p. 216.

not share his wife's belief in spiritualism; a reference to 'Sludge the Medium' is sufficient to establish his position in the matter. But it is easy to make too much of the supposed 'difference.' Certainly it has left no trace in Mrs. Browning's letters which are now extant. There is no sign in them that the divergence of opinion produced the slightest discord in the harmony of their life. No doubt Mr. Browning felt strongly as to the character of some of the persons, whether mediums or their devotees, with whom his wife was brought into contact, and he may have relieved his feelings by strong expressions of his opinion concerning them; but there is no reason to lay stress on this as indicating any serious difference between himself and his wife.

It has seemed necessary to say so much, lest it should be supposed that any of the omissions, which have been made in order to reduce the bulk of the letters within reasonable limits, cover passages in which such a difference is spoken of. In no single instance is this the case. The omissions have been made in the interests of the reader, not in order to affect in any way the representation which the letters give of their writer's feelings and character. With this preface they may be left to tell their own tale.

To Miss Browning

Florence: November 14, 1852 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — You can't think how pleased I am to find myself in Florence again in our own house, everything looking exactly as if we had left it yesterday. Scarcely I can believe that we have gone away at all. But Robert has been perfectly demoralised by Paris, and thinks it all as dull as possible after the boulevards: 'no life, no variety.' Oh, of course it *is* very dead in comparison! but it's a beautiful death, and what with the lovely climate, and the lovely associations, and the sense of repose, I could turn myself on my pillow and sleep on here to the end of my life; only be sure that I *shall do no such thing*. We are

going back to Paris; you will have us safe. Peninni had worked himself up to a state of complete agitation on entering Florence, through hearing so much about it. First he kissed me and then Robert again and again, as if his little heart were full. '*Poor Florence*,' said he while we passed the bridge. Certainly there never was such a darling since the world began. . . . I suffered extremely through our unfortunate election of the Mont Cenis route (much more my own fault than Robert's), and was extremely unwell at Genoa, to the extent of almost losing heart and hope, which is a most unusual case with me, but the change from Lyons had been too sudden and severe. At Genoa the weather was so exquisite, so absolutely June weather, that at the end of a week's lying on the sofa, I had rallied again quite, only poor darling Robert was horribly vexed and out of spirits all that time, as was natural. I feel myself, every now and then (and did then), like a weight round his neck, poor darling, though he does not account it so, for his part. Well, but it passed, and we were able to walk about beautiful Genoa the last two days, and visit Andrea Doria's palace and enjoy everything together. Then we came on by a night and day's diligence through a warm air, which made me better and better. By the way, Turin is nearly as cold as Chambéry; you can't believe yourself to be in Italy. Susa, at the foot of the Alps, is warmer. We were all delighted to hear the sound of our dear Italian, and inclined to be charmed with everything; and Peninni fairly expressed the kind of generalisations we were given to, when he observed philosophically, 'In Italy, pussytats don't never *scwatch*, mama.' This was in reply to an objection I had made to a project of his about kissing the head of an enchanting pussy-cat who presented herself in vision to him as we were dining at Turin. . . . God bless and preserve you. We love you dearly, and talk of you continually — of both of you. Your most affectionate sister,

BA.

Best love to your father. — Peninni.

To John Kenyon

Casa Guidi: November 23, 1852.

We flatter ourselves, dearest Mr. Kenyon, that as we think so much of you, you may be thinking a little of us, and will not be sorry — who knows? — to have a few words from us.

November 24.

Just as I was writing, had written, that sentence yesterday, came the letter which contained your notelet. Thank you, thank you, dearest friend, it is very pleasant to have such a sign from your hand across the Alps of kindness and remembrance. As to my sins in the choice of the Mont Cenis route, 'Bradshaw' was full of temptation, and the results to me have so entirely passed away now, that even the wholesome state of repentance is very faded in the colours. What chiefly remains is the sense of wonderful contrast between climate and climate when we found ourselves at Genoa and in June. I can't get rid of the astonishment of it even now. At Turin I had to keep up a fire most of the night in my bedroom, and at Genoa, with all the windows and doors open, we were gasping for breath, languid with the heat, blue burning skies overhead, and not enough stirring air for refreshment. Nothing less, perhaps, would have restored me so soon, and it was delightful to be able during our last two days of our ten days there to stand on Andrea Doria's terrace, and look out on that beautiful bay with its sweep of marble palaces. My 'unconquerable mind' even carried me halfway up the lighthouse for the sake of the 'view,' only there I had to stop ingloriously, and let Robert finish the course alone while I rested on a bench: aspiration is not everything, either in literature or lighthouses, you know, let us be ever so 'insolvent.'

Well, and since we left Turin, everywhere in Italy we have found summer, summer — not a fire have we needed even in Florence. Such mornings, such evenings, such

walkings out in the dusk, such sunsets over the Arno! ah, Mr. Kenyon, you in England forget what life is in this out-of-door fresh world, with your cloistral habits and necessities! I assure you I can't help fancying that the winter is over and gone, the past looks so cold and black in the warm light of the present. We have had some rain, but at night, and only thundery frank rains which made the next day warmer, and I have all but lost my cough, and am feeling very well and very happy.

Oh, yes, it made me glad to see our poor darling Florence again; I do love Florence when all's said against it, and when Robert (demoralised by Paris) has said most strongly that the place is dead, and dull, and flat, which it is, I must confess, particularly to our eyes fresh from the palpitating life of the Parisian boulevards, where we could scarcely find our way to Prichard's for the crowd during our last fortnight there. Poor Florence, so dead, as Robert says, and as we both feel, so trodden flat in the dust of the vineyards by these mules of Austria and these asses of the papacy: good heavens! how long are these things to endure? I do love Florence, when all's said. The very calm, the very dying stillness is expressive and touching. And then our house, our tables, our chairs, our carpets, everything looking rather better for our having been away! Overjoyed I was to feel myself *at home* again! our Italians so pleased to see us, Wiedeman's nurse rushing in, kissing my lips away almost, and seizing on the child, 'Dio mio, come è bellino!' the tears pouring down her cheeks, not able to look, for emotion, at the shawl we had brought her from England. Poor Italians! who can help caring for them, and feeling for them in their utter prostration just now? The unanimity of despair on all sides is an affecting thing, I can assure you. There is no mistake *here*, no possibility of mistake or doubt as to the sentiment of the people towards the actual régime; and if your English newspapers earnestly want to sympathise with an oppressed

people, let them speak a little for Tuscany. The most hopeful word we have heard uttered by the Italians is, 'Surely it cannot last.' It is the hope of the agonising.

But our 'carta di soggiorno' was sent to us duly. The government is not over learned in literature, oh no. . . .

And only Robert has seen Mr. Powers yet, for he is in the crisis of removal to a new house and studio, a great improvement on the last, and an excellent sign of prosperity of course. He is to come to us some evening as soon as he can take breath. We have had visits from the attachés at the English embassy here, Mr. Wolf, and Mr. Lytton,[1] Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's son, and I think we shall like the latter, who (a reason for my particular sympathy) is inclined to various sorts of spiritualism, and given to the magic arts. He told me yesterday that several of the American rapping spirits are imported to Knebworth, to his father's great satisfaction. A very young man, as you may suppose, the son is; refined and gentle in manners. Sir Henry Bulwer is absent from Florence just now.

As to our house, it really looks better to my eyes than it used to look. Mr. Lytton wondered yesterday how we could think of leaving it, and so do I, almost. The letting has answered well enough; that is, it has paid all expenses, leaving an advantage to us of a house during *six months*, at our choice to occupy ourselves or let again. Also it might have been let for a year (besides other offers), only our agent expecting us in September, and mistaking our intentions generally, refused to do so. Now I will tell you what our plans are. We shall stay here till we can let our house. If we don't let it we shall continue to occupy it, and put off Rome till the spring, but the probability is that we shall have an offer before the end of December, which will be quite time enough for a Roman winter. In fact, I hear of a fever at Rome and another at Naples, and would rather, on every

[1] The late Earl Lytton.

account, as far as I am concerned, stay a little longer in Florence. I can be cautious, you see, upon some points, and Roman fevers frighten me for our little Wiedeman.

As to your 'science' of 'turning the necessity of travelling into a luxury,' my dearest cousin, do let me say that, like some of the occult sciences, it requires a good deal of gold to work out. Your too generous kindness enabled us to do what we couldn't certainly have done without it, but nothing would justify us, you know, in not considering the cheapest way of doing things notwithstanding. So Bradshaw, as I say, tempted us, and the sight of the short cut in the map (pure delusion those maps are!) beguiled us, and we crossed the 'cold valley' and the 'cold mountain' when we shouldn't have done either, and we have bought experience and paid for it. Never mind! experience is nearly always worth its price. And I have nearly lost my cough, and Robert is dosing me indefatigably with cod's liver oil to do away with my thinness. . . .

Robert's best love, with that of your most

Gratefully affectionate

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Florence: winter 1852–3.]

[*The beginning of the letter is lost.*]

The state of things here in Tuscany is infamous and cruel. The old serpent, the Pope, is wriggling his venom into the heart of all possibilities of free thought and action. It is a dreadful state of things. Austria the hand, the papal power the brain! and no energy in the victim for resistance — only for hatred. They do hate here, I am glad to say.

But we linger at Florence in spite of all. It was delightful to find ourselves in the old nest, still warm, of Casa Guidi, to sit in our own chairs and sleep in our own beds;

and here we shall stay as late perhaps as March, if we don't re-let our house before. Then we go to Rome and Naples. You can't think how we have caught up our ancient traditions just where we left them, and relapsed into our former soundless, stirless hermit life. Robert has not passed an evening from home since we came — just as if we had never known Paris. People come sometimes to have tea and talk with us, but that's all; a few intelligent and interesting persons sometimes, such as Mr. Tennyson (the poet's brother) and Mr. Lytton (the novelist's son) and Mr. Stuart, the lecturer on Shakespeare, whom once I named to you, I fancy. Mr. Tennyson married an Italian, and has four children. He has much of the atmosphere poetic about him, a dreamy, speculative, shy man, reminding us of his brother in certain respects; good and pure minded. I like him. Young Mr. Lytton is very young, as you may suppose, with all sorts of high aspirations — and visionary enough to suit *me*, which is saying much — and affectionate, with an apparent liking to us both, which is engaging to us, of course. We have seen the Trollopes once, the younger ones, but the elder Mrs. Trollope was visible neither at that time nor since. . . .

I sit here reading Dumas' 'last,' notwithstanding. Dumas is astonishing; he never *will* write himself out; there's no dust on his shoes after all this running; his last books are better than his first.

Do your American friends write ever to you about the rapping spirits? I hear and would hear much of them. It is said that at least fifteen thousand persons in America, of all classes and society, are *mediums*, as the term is. Most curious these phenomena.

[*The end of the letter is lost.*]

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To Miss Mitford

Casa Guidi, Florence: February [1853].

I had just heard of your accident from Arabel, my much loved friend, and was on the point of writing to you when your letter came. To say that I was shocked and grieved to hear such news of you, is useless indeed; you will feel how I have felt about it. May God bless and restore you, and make me very thankful, as certainly I must be in such a case. . . .

The comfort to me in your letter is the apparent good spirits you write in, and the cheerful, active intentions you have of work for the delight of us all. I clap my hands, and welcome the new volumes. Dearest friend, I do wish I had heard about the French poetry in Paris, for there I could have got at books and answered some of your questions. The truth is, I don't know as much about French modern poetry as I ought to do in the way of *métier*. The French essential poetry seems to me to flow out into prose works, into their school of romances, and to be least poetical when dyked up into rhythm. Mdme. Valmore I never read, but she is esteemed highly, I think, for a certain *naïveté*, and happy surprises in the thought and feeling, *des mots charmants*. I wanted to get her books in Paris, and missed them somehow; there was so much to think of in Paris. Alfred de Musset's poems I read, collected in a single volume; it is the only edition I ever met with. The French value him extremely for his *music;* and there is much in him otherwise to appreciate, I think; very beautiful things indeed. He is best to my mind when he is most lyrical, and when he says things in a breath. His elaborate poems are defective. One or two Spanish ballads of his seem to me perfect, really. He has great power in the introduction of familiar and conventional images without disturbing the ideal — a good power for these days. The worst is that the

moral atmosphere is *bad*, and that, though I am not, as you know, the very least bit of a prude (not enough perhaps), some of his poems must be admitted to be most offensive. Get St. Beuve's poems, they have much beauty in them you will grant at once. Then there is a Breton[1] poet whose name Robert and I have both of us been ungrateful enough to forget — we have turned our brains over and over and can't find the name anyhow — and who, indeed, deserves to be remembered, who writes some fresh and charmingly simple idyllic poems, one called, I think, 'Primel et Nola.' By that clue you may hunt him out perhaps in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes.' There's no strong imagination, understand — nothing of that sort! but you have a sweet, fresh, cool sylvan feeling with him, rare among Frenchmen of his class. Edgar Quinet has more positive genius. He is a man of grand, extravagant conceptions. Do you know the 'Ahasuerus'?

I wonder if the Empress pleases you as well as the Emperor. For my part, I approve altogether, and none the less that he has offended Austria by the mode of announcement. Every cut of the whip in the face of Austria is an especial compliment to me — or, *so I feel it.* Let him head the democracy and do his duty to the world, and use to the utmost his great opportunities. Mr. Cobden and the Peace Society are pleasing me infinitely just now in making head against the immorality (that's the word) of the English press. The tone taken up towards France is immoral in the highest degree, and the invasion cry would be idiotic if it were not something worse. The Empress, I heard the other day from good authority, is 'charming and good at heart.' She was educated 'at a respectable school at Bristol' (Miss Rogers's Royal Crescent, Clifton), and is very 'English,' which doesn't prevent her from shooting with pistols, leaping gates, driving 'four-in-hand,' and upsetting the carriage when the frolic requires it, as brave as a lion and as true as

[1] Auguste Brizieux.

a dog. Her complexion is like marble, white, pale and pure; her hair light, rather 'sandy,' they say, and she powders it with gold dust for effect; but there is less physical and more intellectual beauty than is generally attributed to her. She is a woman of 'very decided opinions.' I like all that, don't you? and I liked her letter to the Préfet, as everybody must. Ah, if the English press were in earnest in the cause of liberty, there would be something to say for our poor trampled-down Italy — much to say, I mean. Under my eyes is a people really oppressed, really groaning its heart out. But these things are spoken of with measure.

We are reading Lamartine and Proudhon on '48. We have plenty of French books here; only the poets are to seek — the moderns. Do you catch sight of Moore in diary and letters? Robert, who has had glimpses of him, says the 'flunkeyism' is quite humiliating. It is strange that you have not heard more of the rapping spirits. They are worth hearing of were it only in the point of view of the physiognomy of the times, as a sign of hallucination and credulity, if not more. Fifteen thousand persons in all ranks of society, and all degrees of education, are said to be *mediums*, that is *seers*, or rather hearers and recipients, perhaps. Oh, I can't tell you all about it; but the details are most curious. I understand that Dickens has caught a wandering spirit in London and showed him up victoriously in 'Household Words' as neither more nor less than the 'cracking of toe joints;' but it is absurd to try to adapt such an explanation to cases in general. You know I am rather a visionary, and inclined to knock round at all the doors of the present world to try to get out, so that I listen with interest to every goblin story of the kind, and, indeed, I hear enough of them just now.

We heard nothing, however, from the American Minister, Mr. Marsh, and his wife, who have just come from Constantinople in consequence of the change of Presidency, and who passed an evening with us a few days ago. She is pretty and interesting, a great invalid and almost blind, yet she has

lately been to Jerusalem, and insisted on being carried to the top of Mount Horeb. After which I certainly should have the courage to attempt the journey myself, if we had money enough. Going to the Holy Land has been a favorite dream of Robert's and mine ever since we were married, and some day you will wonder why I don't write, and hear suddenly that I am lost in the desert. You will wonder, too, at our wandering madness, by the way, more than at any rapping spirit extant; we have 'a spirit in our feet,' as Shelley says in his lovely Eastern song — and our child is as bad as either of us. He says, 'I *tuite* tired of *Flolence*. I want to go to *Brome*,' which is worse than either of us. I never am tired of Florence. Robert has had an application from Miss Faucit (now Mrs. Martin) to bring out his 'Colombe's Birthday' at the Haymarket.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Florence: March 3, 1853.

My dearest Isa, . . . You have seen in the papers that Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer has had an accident in the arm, which keeps him away from the House of Commons, and even from the Haymarket, where they are acting his play ('Not so bad as we seem') with some success. Well, here is a curious thing about it. Mr. Lytton told us some time ago, that, by several clairvoyantes, without knowledge or connection with one another, an impending accident had been announced to him, 'not fatal, but serious.' Mr. Lytton said, 'I have been very uneasy about it, and nervous as every letter arrived, but nearly three months having passed, I began to think they must have made a mistake — only it is curious that they all should *all* make a mistake of the same kind precisely.' When after this we saw the accident in the paper, it was effective, as you may suppose!

Profane or not, I am resolved on getting as near to a solution of the spirit question as I can, and I don't believe in the least risk of profanity, seeing that whatever is, must be permitted; and that the contemplation of whatever is, must be permitted also, where the intentions are pure and reverent. I can discern no more danger in psychology than in mineralogy, only intensely a greater interest. As to the spirits, I care less about what they are capable of communicating, than of the fact of there being communications. I certainly wouldn't set about building a system of theology out of their oracles. God forbid. They seem abundantly foolish, one must admit. There is probably, however, a mixture of good spirits and bad, foolish and wise, of the lower orders perhaps, in both kinds. . . .

Isa, you and I must try to make head against the strong-minded women, though really you half frighten me prospectively. . . .

—— ——, one of the strong-minded, we just escaped with life from in London, and again in Paris. In Rome she has us! What makes me talk so ill-naturedly is the information I have since received, that she has put everybody unfortunate enough to be caught, into a book, and published them at full length, in American fashion. Now I do confess to the greatest horror of being caught, stuck through with a pin, and beautifully preserved with other butterflies and beetles, even in the album of a Corinna in yellow silk. I detest that particular sort of victimisation. . . .

We are invited to go to Constantinople this summer, to visit the American Minister there. There's a temptation for you!

God bless you, dearest Isa. I shall be delighted to see you again, and so will Robert! I always feel (I say to him sometimes) that you love me a little, and that I may rest on you. Your ever affectionate friend,

Elizabeth B. Browning.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: March 15, [1853].

. . . The spring has surprised us here just as we were beginning to murmur at the cold. Think of somebody advising me the other day not to send out my child without a double-lined parasol! There's a precaution for March! The sun is powerful — we are rejoicing in our Italian climate. Oh, that I could cut out just a mantle of it to wrap myself in, and so go and see you. Your house is dry, you say. Is the room you occupy airy as well as warm? Because being confined to a small room, with you who are so used to liberty and out of door life, must be depressing to the vital energies. Do you read much? No, no, you ought not to think of the press, of course, till you are strong. Ah — if you should get to London to see our play, how glad I should be! We, too, talk of London, but somewhat mistily, and not so early in the summer. Mr. and Mrs. Marsh — he is the American Minister at Constantinople — have been staying in Florence, and passing some evenings with us. They tempt us with an invitation to Constantinople this summer, which would be irresistible if we had the money for the voyage, perhaps, so perhaps it is as well that we have not. Enough for us that we are going to Rome and to Naples, then northward. I am busy in the meanwhile with various things, a new poem, and revising for a third edition which is called for by the gracious public. Robert too is busy with another book. Then I am helping to make frocks for my child, reading Proudhon (and Swedenborg), and in deep meditation on the nature of the rapping spirits, upon whom, I understand, a fellow dramatist of yours, Henry Spicer (I think you once mentioned him to me as such), has just written a book entitled, 'The Mystery of the Age.' A happy winter it has been to me altogether. We have had so much repose, and at the same time so much interest in life, also I have been

so well, that I shall be sorry when we go out of the harbour again with the spring breezes. We like Mr. Tennyson extremely, and he is a constant visitor of ours: the poet's elder brother. By the way, the new edition of the Ode on the Duke of Wellington seems to contain wonderful strokes of improvement. Have you seen it? As to Alexandre Dumas, Fils, I hope it is not true that he is in any scrape from the cause you mention. He is very clever, and I have a feeling for him for his father's sake as well as because he presents a rare instance of intellectual heirship. Didn't I tell you of the prodigious success of his drama of the 'Dame aux Camélias,' which ran about a hundred nights last year, and is running again? how there were caricatures on the boulevards, showing the public of the pit holding up umbrellas to protect themselves from the tears rained down by the public of the boxes? how the President of the Republic went to see, and sent a bracelet to the first actress, and how the English newspapers called him immoral for it? how I went to see, myself, and cried so that I was ill for two days and how my aunt called *me* immoral for it? I was properly lectured, I assure you. She 'quite wondered how Mr. Browning could allow such a thing,' not comprehending that Mr. Browning never, or scarcely ever, does think of restraining his wife from anything she much pleases to do. The play was too painful, that was the worst of it, but I maintain it is a highly moral play, rightly considered, and the acting was most certainly most exquisite on the part of all the performers. Not that Alexandre Dumas, Fils, excels generally in morals (in his books, I mean), but he is really a promising writer as to cleverness, and when he has learnt a little more art he will take no low rank as a novelist. Robert has just been reading a tale of his called 'Diane de Lys,' and throws it down with — 'You must read that, Ba — it is clever — only outrageous as to the morals.' Just what I should expect from Alexandre Dumas, Fils. I have a tenderness for the whole family, you see.

You don't say a word to me of Mrs. Beecher Stowe. How did her book[1] impress you? No woman ever had such a success, such a fame; no man ever had, in a single book. For my part I rejoice greatly in it. It is an individual glory full of healthy influence and benediction to the world.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Jameson

Casa Guidi, Florence: March 17, [1853].

Thank you — how to thank you enough — for the too kind present of the 'Madonna,'[2] dearest Mona Nina. I will not wait to read it through — we have only *looked* through it, which is different; but there is enough seen so beautiful as to deserve the world's thanks, to say nothing of ours, and there are personal reasons besides why *we* should thank you. Have you not quoted us, have you not sent us the book? Surely, good reasons.

But now, be still better to me, and write and say how you are. I want to know that you are quite well; if you can tell me so, do. You have told me of a new book, which is excellent news, and I hear from another quarter that it will consist of your 'Readings' and 'Remarks,' a sort of book most likely to penetrate widely and be popular in a good sense. Would it not be well to bring out such a work volume by volume at intervals? Is it this you are contemplating? . . .

Robert and I have had a very happy winter in Florence; let me, any way, answer for myself. I have been well, and we have been quiet and occupied; reading books, doing work, playing with Wiedeman; and with nothing from without to vex us much. At the end of it all, we go to

[1] *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852.

[2] Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*.

Rome certainly; but we have taken on this apartment for another year, which Robert decided on to please me, and because it was reasonable on the whole. We have been meditating Socialism and mysticism of very various kinds, deep in Louis Blanc and Proudhon, deeper in the German spiritualists, added to which, I have by no means given up my French novels and my rapping spirits, of whom our American guests bring us relays of witnesses. So we don't absolutely moulder here in the intellect, only Robert (and indeed I have too) has tender recollections of 'that blaze of life in Paris,' and we both mean to go back to it presently. No place like Paris for living in. Here, one sleeps, 'perchance to dream,' and praises the pillow.

We had a letter from our friend M. Milsand yesterday; you see he does not forget us — no, indeed. In speaking of the state of things in France, which I had asked him to do, he says, he is not sanguine (he never *is* sanguine, I must tell you, about anything), though entirely dissentient from *la presse Anglaise*. He considers on the whole that the *status* is as good as can be desired, as a *stable foundation for the development of future institutions*. It is in that point of view that he regards the situation. So do I. As to the English press, I, who am not 'anglomane' like our friend, I call it plainly either maniacal or immoral, let it choose the epithet. The invasion cry, for instance, I really can't qualify it; I can't comprehend it with motives all good and fair. I throw it over to you to analyse.

With regard to the sudden death of French literature, you all exaggerate that like the rest. If you look into even the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' for the year 1852, you will see that a few books are still published. *Pazienza*. Things will turn up better than you suppose. Newspapers breathe heavily just now, that's undeniable; but for book literature the government *never has* touched it with a finger. I ascertained *that* as a fact when I was in Paris.

e of you in England understand what the crisis has

been in France, and how critical measures have been necessary. Lamartine's work on the revolution of '48 is one of the best apologies for Louis Napoleon; and, if you want another, take Louis Blanc's work on the same.

Isn't it a shame that nobody comes from the north to the south, after a hundred oaths? I hear nothing of dear Mr. Kenyon. I hear nothing from you of *your* coming. You won't come, any of you. . . .

I am much relieved by hearing that Mazzini is gone from Italy, whatever Lord Malmesbury may say of it. Every day I expected to be told that he was taken at Milan and shot. A noble man, though incompetent, I think, to his own aspiration; but a man who personally has my sympathies always. The state of things here is cruel, the people are one groan. God deliver us all, I must pray, and by almost any means.

As to your Ministry, I don't expect very much from it. Lord Aberdeen, 'put on' to Lord John, is using the drag uphill. They will do just as little as they can, be certain.

Think of my submitting at last to the conjugal will and cod's liver oil — yes, and think of it's doing me good. The cough was nearly, if not quite, gone because of the climate, before I took the oil, but it does me good by making me gain in flesh. I am much less thin, and very well, and dearest Robert triumphant.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: April 12, [1853].

The comfort is, my ever loved friend, that here is spring — summer, as translated into Italy — if fine weather is to set you up again. I shall be very thankful to have better news of you; to hear of your being out of that room and loosened into some happy condition of liberty. It seems unnatural to think of you in one room. *That* seems fitter for *me*, doesn't it? And the rooms in England are so low and

small, that they put double bars on one's captivity. May God bring you out with the chestnut trees and elms! It's very sad meanwhile.

Comfort yourself, dear friend! Admire Louis Napoleon. He's an extraordinary man beyond all doubt; and that he has achieved great good for France, *I* do not in the least doubt. I was only telling you that I had not finished my pedestal for him — wait a little. Because, you see, for my part, I don't go over to the system of 'mild despotisms,' no, indeed. I am a democrat to the bone of me. It is simply as a democratical ruler, and by grace of the people, that I accept him, and he must justify himself by more deeds to his position before he glorifies himself before *me*. That's what I mean to say. A mild despot in France, let him be the Archangel Gabriel, unless he hold the kingdom in perpetuity, what is the consequence? A successor like the Archangel Lucifer, perhaps. Then, for the press, where there is thought, there must be discussion or conspiracy. Are you aware of the amount of readers in France? Take away the 'Times' newspaper, and the blow falls on a handful of readers, on a section of what may be called the aristocracy. But everybody reads in France. Every fiacre driver who waits for you at a shop door, beguiles the time with a newspaper. It is on that account that the influence of the press is dangerous, you will say. Precisely so; but also, on that account too, it is necessary. No; I hold, myself, that he will give more breathing room to France, as circumstances admit of it. Else, there will be convulsion. You will see. We shall see. And Louis Napoleon, who is wise, *fore*sees, I cannot doubt.

Not read Mrs. Stowe's book! But you *must*. Her book is quite a sign of the times, and has otherwise and intrinsically considerable power. For myself, I rejoice in the success, both as a woman and a human being. Oh, and is it possible that you think a woman has no business with questions like the question of slavery? Then she had better

use a pen no more. She had better subside into slavery and concubinage herself, I think, as in the times of old, shut herself up with the Penelopes in the 'women's apartment,' and take no rank among thinkers and speakers. Certainly you are not in earnest in these things. A difficult question — yes! All virtue is difficult. England found it difficult. France found it difficult. But we did not make ourselves an armchair of our sins. As for America, I honor America in much; but I would not be an American for the world while she wears that shameful scar upon her brow. The address of the new President[1] exasperates me. Observe, I am an abolitionist, not to the fanatical degree, because I hold that compensation should be given by the North to the South, as in England. The States should unite in buying off this national disgrace.

The Americans are very kind and earnest, and I like them all the better for their warm feeling towards you. Is Longfellow agreeable in his personal relations? We knew his brother, I think I told you, in Paris. I suppose Mr. Field has been liberal to Thackeray, and yet Thackeray does not except him in certain observations on American publishers. We shall have an arrangement made of some sort, it appears. Mr. Forster wants me to add some new poems to my new edition, in order to secure the copyright under the new law. But as the law does not act backwards, I don't see how new poems would save me. They would just sweep out the new poems — that's all. One or two lyrics could not be made an object, and in those two thick volumes, nearly bursting with their present contents, there would not be room for many additions. No, I shall add nothing. I have revised the edition very carefully, and made everything better. It vexed me to see how much there was to do. Positively, even rhymes left unrhymed in 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship.' You don't write so carelessly,

[1] General Franklin Pierce.

not you, and the reward is that you haven't so much trouble in your new editions. I see your book advertised in a stray number of the 'Athenæum' lent to me by Mr. Tennyson — Frederick. He lent it to me because I wanted to see the article on the new poet, Alexander Smith, who appears so applauded everywhere. He has the poet's *stuff* in him, one may see from the extracts. Do you know him? And Coventry Patmore — have you heard anything of *his* book,[1] of which appears an advertisement?

Ah, yes; how unfortunate that you should have parted with your copyrights! It's a bad plan always, except in the case of novels which have their day, and no day after.

The poem I am about will fill a volume when done. It is the novel or romance I have been hankering after so long, written in blank verse, in the autobiographical form; the heroine, an artist woman — not a painter, mind. It is intensely modern, crammed from the times (not the 'Times' newspaper) as far as my strength will allow. Perhaps you won't like it, perhaps you will. Who knows? who dares hope?

I am beginning to be anxious about 'Colombe's Birthday.' I care much more about it than Robert does. He says that nobody will mistake it for *his* speculation, it's Mr. Buckstone's affair altogether. True; but I should like it to succeed, being Robert's play notwithstanding. But the play is subtle and refined for pits and galleries. I am nervous about it. On the other hand, those theatrical people ought to know; and what in the world made them select it if it is not likely to answer their purpose? By the way, a dreadful rumour reaches us of its having been '*prepared for the stage by the author*.' Don't believe a word of it. Robert just said 'yes' when they wrote to ask him, and not a line of communication has passed since. He has prepared nothing at all, suggested nothing, modified nothing.

[1] 'Tamerton Church Tower, and other Poems.'

He referred them to his new edition; and that was the whole.

We see a great deal of Mr. Tennyson. Robert is very fond of him, and so am I. He too writes poems, and prints them, though not for the public. They are better and stronger than Charles Tennyson's, and he has the poetical temperament in everything. Did I tell you that he had married an Italian, and had children from twelve years old downwards? He is intensely English nevertheless, as expatriated Englishmen generally are. I always tell Robert that his patriotism grows and deepens in exact proportion as he goes away from England. As for me, it is not so with me. I am very cosmopolitan, and am considerably tired of the self-deification of the English nation at the expense of all others. We have some noble advantages over the rest of the world, but it is not all advantage. The shameful details of bribery, for instance, prove what I have continually maintained, the non-representativeness of our 'representative system;' and, socially speaking, we are much behindhand with most foreign peoples. Let us be proud in the right place, I say, and not in the wrong. We see too a good deal of young Lytton, Sir Edward's only son, an interesting young man, with various sorts of good, and aspiration to good, in him. You see we are not at Rome yet. Do write to me. Speak of yourself particularly. God bless you, dearest friend. Believe that I think of you and love you most faithfully.

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: April 21, 1853.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am in consternation and vexation on receiving your letter. What you must have thought of me all this time! Of course I never saw the letters which went to Rome. Letters sent to Poste restante, Rome, are generally lost, even if you are a Roman; and

we are no Romans, alas! nor likely to become such, it seems to me. There's a fatality about Rome to us. I waited for you to write, and then waited on foolishly for the settlement of our own plans, after I had ascertained that you were not in Devonshire, but in France as usual. Now, I can't help writing, though I have written a letter already which must have crossed yours — a long letter — so that you will have more than enough of me this time.

It's comfort and pleasure after all to have a good account of you both, my very dear friends, even though one knows by it that you have been sending one 'al diavolo' for weeks or months. Forgive me, do. I feel guilty somehow to the extreme degree, that four letters should have been written to me, even though I received none of them, because I ought to have written at least one letter in that time.

Your politics would be my politics on most points; we should run together more than halfway, if we could stand side by side, in spite of all your vindictiveness to N. III. My hero — say you? Well, I have more belief in him than you have. And what is curious, and would be unaccountable, I suppose, to English politicians in general, the Italian democrats of the lower classes, the popular clubs in Florence, are clinging to him as their one hope. Ah, here's oppression! here's a people trodden down! You should come here and see. It is enough to turn the depths of the heart bitter. The will of the people forced, their instinctive affections despised, their liberty of thought spied into, their national life ignored altogether. Robert keeps saying, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' Such things cannot last, surely. Oh, this brutal Austria.

I myself expect help from Louis Napoleon, though scarcely in the way that the clubs are said to do. When I talk of a club, of course I mean a secret combination of men — young men who meet to read forbidden newspapers and talk forbidden subjects. He won't help the Mazzini-

* he will do something for Italy, you will see. The

Cardinals feel it, and that's why they won't let the Pope go to Paris. We shall see. I seem to catch sight of the grey of dawn even in the French Government papers, and am full of hope.

As to Mazzini, he is a noble man and an unwise man. Unfortunately the epithets are compatible. Kossuth is neither very noble nor very wise. I have heard and *felt* a great deal of harm of him. The truth is not in him. And when a patriot lies like a Jesuit, what are we to say?

For England — do you approve of the fleet staying on at Malta? We are prepared to do nothing which costs us a halfpenny for a less gain than three farthings — always excepting the glorious national defences, which have their end too, though not the one generally attributed. . . .

God bless you, my dear, dear friends! Care in your thoughts for us all!

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To John Kenyon

Casa Guidi: May 16, [1853].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — You are to be thanked and loved as ever, and what can we say more? This: Do be good to us by a supererogatory virtue and write to us. You can't know how pleasant it is to be *en rapport* with you, though by holding such a fringe of a garment as a scrap of letter is. We don't see you, we don't hear you! 'Rap' to us with the end of your pen, like the benign spirit you are, and let me (who am credulous) believe that you care for us and think kindly of us in the midst of your brilliant London gossipry, and that you don't disdain the talk of us, dark ultramontanists as we are. You are good to us in so many ways, that it's a reason for being good in another way besides. At least, to reason so is one of the foolishnesses of my gratitude.

On the whole, I am satisfied with regard to 'Colombe.'

I never expected a theatrical success, properly and vulgarly so called; and the play has taken rank, to judge by the various criticisms, in the right way, as a true poet's work: the defects of the acting drama seemed recognised as the qualities of the poem. It was impossible all that subtle tracery of thought and feeling should be painted out clear red and ochre with a house-painter's brush, and lose nothing of its effect.[1] A play that runs nowadays has generally four legs to run with — something of the beast to keep it going. The human biped with the 'os divinior' is slower than a racehorse even. What I hope is, that the poetical appreciation of 'Colombe' will give an impulse to the sale of the poems, which will be more acceptable to us than the other kind of success. . . .

Yes, dearest Mr. Kenyon, we mean, if we can, to go to Rome in the autumn. It is very wrong of you not to come too, and the reasons you give against it are by no means conclusive. My opinion is that, whatever the term of your natural life may be, you would probably have an additional ten years fastened on to it by coming to the Continent, and so I tease you and tease you, as is natural to such an opinion. People twirl now in their arm-chairs, and the vitality in them kindles as they rush along. Remember how pleased you were when you were at Como! Don't draw a chalk circle round you and fancy you can't move. Even tables and chairs have taken to move lately, and hats spin round without a giddy head in them. Is this a time to stand still, even in the garden at Wimbledon? 'I speak to a wise man; judge what I say.'

We tried the table experiment in this room a few days

[1] In a letter to Miss Mitford, written four days later than this, Mrs. Browning alludes again to the performance of 'Colombe's Birthday:' 'Yes — Robert's play succeeded, but there could be no "run" for a play of that kind; it was a *succès d'estime* and something more, which is surprising, perhaps, considering the miserable acting of the men. Miss Faucit was alone in doing us justice.'

since, by-the-bye, and failed; but we were impatient, and Robert was playing Mephistopheles, as Mr. Lytton said, and there was little chance of success under the circumstances. It has been done several times in Florence, and the fact of the possibility seems to have passed among 'attested facts.' There was a placard on the wall yesterday about a pamphlet purporting to be an account of these and similar phenomena 'Scoperte a Livorno,' referring to 'oggetti semoventi' and other wonders. You can't even look at a wall without a touch of the subject. The *circoli* at Florence are as revolutionary as ever, only tilting over tables instead of States, alas! From the Legation to the English chemist's, people are 'serving tables' (in spite of the Apostle) everywhere. When people gather round a table it isn't to play whist. So good, you say. You can believe in table-moving, because *that* may be 'electricity;' but you can't believe in the 'rapping spirits,' with the history of whom these movements are undeniably connected, because it's 'a jump.' Well, but you will jump when the time comes for jumping, and when the evidence is strong enough. I know you; you are strong enough and true enough to jump at anything, without being afraid. The tables jump, observe — and *you* may jump. Meanwhile, if you were to hear what we heard only the evening before last from a cultivated woman with truthful, tearful eyes, whose sister is a medium, and whose mother believes herself to be in daily communion with her eldest daughter, dead years ago — if you were to hear what we hear from nearly all the Americans who come to us, their personal experiences, irrespectively of paid mediums, I wonder if you would admit the possibility of your even jumping! Robert, who won't believe, he says, till he sees and hears with his own senses — Robert, who is a sceptic — observed of himself the other day, that we had received as much evidence of these spirits as of the existence of the town of Washington. But then of course he would add — and you

would, reasonably enough — that in a matter of this kind (where you have to jump) you require more evidence, double the evidence, to what you require for the existence of Washington. That's true.

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: June, [1853].

My dearest Fanny, — I hope you will write to me as if I deserved it. You see, my first word is to avert the consequences of my sin instead of repenting of it in the proper and effectual way. The truth is, that ever since I received your letter we have been looking out for 'messengers' from the Legation, so as to save you postage; while the Embassy people have been regularly forgetting us whenever there has been an opportunity. By the way, I catch up that word of 'postage' to beg you *never to think of it* when inclined in charity to write to us. If you knew what a sublunary thing — oh, far below any visible moon! — postage is to us exiles! Too glad we are to get a letter and pay for it. So write to me *directly*, dear Fanny, when you think enough of us for that, and write at length, and tell us of yourself first, swirling off into Pope's circles — 'your country first and then the human race' — and, indeed, we get little news from home on the subjects which especially interest us. My sister sends me heaps of near things, but she is not in the magnetic circles, nor in the literary, nor even in the gossiping. Be good to us, *you* who stand near the fountains of life! Every cup of cold water is worth a ducat here.

To wait to a second page without thanking you for your kindness and sympathy about 'Colombe' does not do justice to the grateful sense I had of both at the time, and have now. We were *very* glad to have your opinion and impressions. Most of our friends took for granted that we had

supernatural communications on the subject, and did not send us a word. Mrs. Duncan Stewart was one of the kind exceptions (with yourself and one or two more), and I write to thank her. It was very pleasant to hear what you said, dear Fanny. Certainly, says the author, you are right, and Helen Faucit wrong, in the particular reading you refer to; but she seems to have been right in so much, that we should only remember our grateful thoughts of her in general.

Now what am I to say about my illustrations — that is, your illustrations of my poems? To thank you again and again first. To be eager next to see what is done. To be sure it is good, and surer still that *you* are good for spending your strength on me. See how it is. When you wrote to me, a new edition was in the press; yes, and I was expecting every day to hear it was out again. But it would not have done, I suppose, to have used illustrations for that sort of edition; it would have raised the price (already too high) beyond the public. But there will be time always for such arrangements — when it so pleases Mr. Chapman, I suppose. Do tell me more of what you have done.

We did not go to Rome last winter, in spite of the spirits of the sun who declared from Lord Stanhope's crystal ball, you remember, that we should. And we don't go to England till next summer, because we must see Rome next winter, and must lie *perdus* in Italy meantime. I have had a happy winter in Florence, recovered my lost advantages in point of health, been busy and tranquil, and plenty of books and talk, and seen my child grow rosier and prettier (said aside) every day. Robert and I are talking of going up to the monasteries beyond Vallombrosa for a day or two, on mule-back through forests and mountains. We have had an excursion to Prato (less difficult) already, and we keep various dreams in our heads to be acted out on occasion. Our favorite friend here is a brother of Alfred Tennyson's, himself a poet, but most admirable to

me for his simplicity and truth. Robert is very fond of him. Then we like Powers — of the 'Greek Slave' — Swedenborgian and spiritualist; and Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's son, who is with us often, and always a welcome visitor. All these confederate friends are ranged with me on the believing side with regard to the phenomena, and Robert has to keep us at bay as he best can. Oh, do tell me what you can. Your account deeply interested me. We have heard many more intimate personal relations from Americans who brush us with their garments as they pass through Florence, and I should like to talk these things over with you. Paid mediums, as paid clairvoyants in general, excite a prejudice; yet, perhaps, not reasonably. The curious fact in this movement is, however, the degree in which it works within private families in America. Has anything of the kind appeared in England? And has the motion of the tables ever taken the form of alphabetical expression, which has been the case in America? I had a letter from Athens the other day, mentioning that 'nothing was talked of there except moving tables and spiritual manifestations.' (The writer was not a believer.) Even here, from the priest to the Mazzinian, they are making circles. An engraving of a spinning table at a shop window bears this motto: '*E pur si muove!*' That's adroit for Galileo's land, isn't it? Now mind you tell me whatever you hear and see. How does Mrs. Crowe decide? By the way, I was glad to observe by the papers that she has had a dramatic success.

Your Alexander Smith has noble stuff in him. It's undeniable, indeed. It strikes us, however, that he has more imagery than verity, more colour than form. He will learn to be less arbitrary in the use of his figures — of which the opulence is so striking — and attain, as he ripens, more clearness of outline and depth of intention. Meanwhile none but a poet could write this, and this, and this.

Your faithfully affectionate

E. B. B., properly speaking Ba.

July 3.

This was written ever so long since. Here we are in July; but I won't write it over again. The 'tables' are speaking alphabetically and intelligently in Paris; they knock with their legs on the floor, establishing (what was clear enough before to *me*) the connection between the table-moving and 'rapping spirits.' Sarianna — who is of the unbelieving of temperaments, as you know — wrote a most curious account to me the other day of a séance at which she had been present, composed simply of one or two of our own honest friends and of a young friend of theirs, a young lady. . . .[1] She says that she 'was not as much impressed as she would have been,' 'but I am bound to tell the truth, that I *do not think it possible that any tricks could have been played.*'

This from Sarianna is equal to the same testimony — from Mr. Chorley, say!

We are planning a retreat into the mountains — into Giotto's country, the Casentino — where we are to find a villa for almost nothing, and shall have our letters sent daily from Florence, together with books and newspapers. I look forward to it with joy. We promise one another to be industrious *à faire frémir*, so as to make the pleasure lawful. Little Penini walks about, talking of 'mine villa,' anxiously hoping that 'some boys' may not have pulled all the flowers before he gets there. He boasts, with considerable complacency, that 'a table in Pallis says I am four years,' though the fact doesn't strike him as extraordinary.

Do you ever see Mr. Kenyon? I congratulate you on your friend's 'Cœur de Lion.' *That* has given you pleasure.

The summer 'retreat' from Florence this year was not to the Casentino after all, but to the Baths of Lucca, which they had already visited in 1849. During their stay there, which lasted from July to October, Mr. Browning is said to have composed 'In a Balcony.'

[1] A few lines have been cut off the letter at this place.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 15, 1853.

. . . We have taken a villa at the Baths of Lucca, after a little holy fear of the company there; but the scenery, the coolness, and the convenience altogether prevail, and we have taken our villa for three months or rather more, and go to it next week with a stiff resolve of not calling nor being called upon. You remember perhaps that we were there four years ago, just after the birth of our child. The mountains are wonderful in beauty, and we mean to buy our holiday by doing some work.

Yesterday evening we had the American Minister at the Court of Turin here, and it was delightful to hear him talk about Piedmont, its progress in civilisation and the comprehension of liberty, and the honesty and resolution of the King. It is the only hope of Italy, that Piedmont! God prosper the hope. Besides this diplomatical dignitary and his wife, we had two American gentlemen of more than average intelligence, who related wonderful things of the 'spiritual manifestations' (so called), incontestable things, inexplicable things. You will have seen Faraday's letter.[1] I wish to reverence men of science, but they often will not let me. If *I* know certain facts on this subject, Faraday *ought* to have known them before he expressed an opinion on it. His statement does not meet the facts of the case — it is a statement which applies simply to various amateur operations without touching on the essential phenomena, such as the moving of tables untouched by a finger.

Our visitor last night, to say nothing of other witnesses, has repeatedly seen this done with his eyes — in private

[1] A letter to the *Athenæum* on July 2, 1853, giving the result of some experiments in table-turning, the tendency of which was to show that the motion of the table was due to unconscious muscular action on the part of the persons touching the table.

houses, for instance, where there could be no machinery — and he himself and his brother have held by the legs of a table to prevent the motion — the medium sitting some yards away — and that table has been wrenched from their grasp and lifted into the air. My husband's sister, who has admirable sense and excessive scepticism on all matters of the kind, was present the other day at the house of a friend of ours in Paris, where an English young lady was medium, and where the table expressed itself intelligently by knocking, with its leg, responses according to the alphabet. For instance, the age of my child was asked, and the leg knocked four times. Sarianna was 'not impressed,' she says, but, 'being bound to speak the truth, she does not *think it possible that any trick could have been used.*' To hear her say so was like hearing Mr. Chorley say so; all her prejudices were against it strongly. Mr. Spicer's book on the subject is flippant and a little vulgar, but the honesty and accuracy of it have been attested to me by Americans oftener than once. By the way, he speaks in it of your interesting 'Recollections,' and quotes you upon the possibility of making a ghost story better by the telling — in reference to Washington.

Mr. Tennyson is going to England for a few months, so that our Florence party is breaking up, you see. He has printed a few copies of his poems, and is likely to publish them if he meets with encouragement in England, I suppose. They are full of imagery, encompassed with poetical atmosphere, and very melodious. On the other hand, there is vagueness and too much personification. It's the smell of a rose rather than a rose — very sweet, notwithstanding. His poems are far superior to Charles Tennyson's, bear in mind. As for the poet, we quite love him, Robert and I do. What Swedenborg calls 'selfhood,' the *proprium*, is not in him.

Oh yes! I confess to loving Florence and to having associated with it the idea of *home*. My child was born

here, and here I have been very happy and *well*. Yet we shall not live in Florence — we are steady to our Paris plan. We must visit Rome next winter, and in the spring we shall go to Paris *via* London; you may rely on us for next summer. I think it too probable that I may not be able to bear two successive winters in the North; but in that case it will be easy to take a flight for a few winter months into Italy, and we shall regard Paris, where Robert's father and sister are waiting for us, as our fixed place of residence. As to the distance between Paris and London, it's a mere step now. We are to have war, I suppose. I would not believe it for a long while, but the Czar seems to be struck with madness — mad in good earnest. Under these circumstances I hope our Ministry will act with decision and honesty — but I distrust Lord Aberdeen. There is evidently, or has been, a division in the Cabinet, and perhaps Lord Palmerston is not the strongest. Louis Napoleon has acted excellently in this conjuncture — with integrity and boldness — don't you think so? Dear Mr. Kenyon has his brother and sister with him, to his great joy. Robert pretended he would not give me your last letter. Little Wiedeman threw his arms round my neck (taking the play-cruelty for earnest) and exclaimed, 'Never mind, mine darling Ba! You'll have it.' He always calls me Ba at coaxing times. Such a darling that child is, indeed!

God bless you! Do write soon and tell me in detail of yourself.

Our united love, but mine the closest!

Your ever most affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss I. Blagden

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
July 26, [1853].

I deserve another scold for this other silence, dearest Isa. Scold as softly as you can! We have been in uncertainty about leaving Florence — where to go for the

summer — and I did not like to write till I could tell you where to write to *me*. Now we are 'fixed,' as our American friends would say. We have taken this house for three months — a larger house than we need. We have a row of plane trees before the door, in which the cicale sing all day, and the beautiful mountains stand close around, keeping us fresh with shadows. Penini thinks he is in Eden — *at least he doesn't think otherwise*. We have a garden and an arbour, and the fireflies light us up at nights. With all this, I am sorry for Florence. Florence was horribly hot, and pleasant notwithstanding. We hated cutting the knot of friends we had there — bachelor friends, Isa, who came to us for coffee and smoking! I was gracious and permitted the cigar (as you were not present), and there were quantities of talk, controversy, and confidences evening after evening. One of our very favourite friends, Frederick Tennyson, is gone to England, or was to have gone, for three months. Mr. Lytton had a reception on the terrace of his villa at Bellosguardo the evening before our last in Florence, and we were all bachelors together there, and I made tea, and we ate strawberries and cream and talked spiritualism through one of the pleasantest two hours that I remember. Such a view! Florence dissolving in the purple of the hills; and the stars looking on. Mr. Tennyson was there, Mr. Powers, and M. Villari,[1] an accomplished Sicilian, besides our young host and ourselves. How we 'set down' Faraday for his 'arrogant and insolent letter,' and what stories we told, and what miracles we swore to! Oh, we are believers here, Isa, except Robert, who persists in wearing a coat of respectable scepticism — so considered — though it is much out of elbows and ragged about the skirts. If I am right, you will none of you be able to disbelieve much longer — a new law, or a new development of law, is making way everywhere. We have heard much — more than I can tell you in a letter. Imposture is absolutely out of the question, to speak generally; and unless you explain the phenomena by

[1] Senatore Villari.

'a personality unconsciously projected' (which requires explanation of itself), you must admit the spirit theory. As to the simpler forms of the manifestation (it is all one manifestation), the 'turning-tables,' I was convinced long before Faraday's letter that *many* of the amateur performances were from involuntary muscular action — but what then? These are only imitations of actual phenomena. Faraday's letter does not meet the common fact of tables being moved and lifted without the touch of a finger. It is a most arrogant letter and singularly inconclusive. Tell me any facts you may hear. Mr. Kinney, the American Minister at the Court of Turin, had arrived at Florence a few days before we quitted it, and he and his wife helped us to spend our last evening at Casa Guidi. He is cultivated and high-minded. I like him much; and none the less that he brings hopeful accounts of the state of Piedmont, of the progress of the people, and good persistency of the King. It makes one's heart beat with the sense that all is not over with our poor Italy.

I am glad you like Frederick Tennyson's poems. They are full of *atmospherical* poetry, and very melodious. The poet is still better than the poems — so truthful, so direct, such a reliable Christian man. Robert and I quite love him. We very much appreciate, too, young Lytton, your old friend. He is noble in many ways, I think, and affectionate. Moreover, he has an incontestable *faculty* in poetry, and I expect great things from him as he ripens into life and experience. Meanwhile he has just privately printed a drama called 'Clytemnestra,' too ambitious because after Æschylus, but full of promise indeed. We are hoping that he will come down and see us in the course of our rustication at the Baths, and occupy our spare bedroom. . . .

As to Mr. ——, his Hebrew was Chinese to *you*, do you say? But, dear, he is strong in veritable Chinese besides! And one evening he nearly assassinated me with the analysis, chapter by chapter, of a Japanese novel. Mr.

Lytton, who happened to be a witness, swore that I grew paler and paler, and not with sympathy for the heroine. He is a miraculously vain man — which rather amused me — and, for the rest, is full of information — yes, and of kindness, I think. He gave me a little black profile of you which gives the air of your head, and is so far valuable to me. As to myself, indeed, he has rather flattered me than otherwise — I don't complain, I assure you. How could I complain of a man who compares me to Isaiah, under any circumstances? . . .

God bless you! Robert's love with that of

Your ever affectionate and faithful

Ba.

To Mr. Chorley

Casa Tolomei (Alla Villa), Bagni di Lucca:
August 10, [1853].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — I can't bear that you should intimate by half a word that you are 'a creature to be eaten' — viz. not to have your share in friendship and confidence. Now, if you fancy that we, for instance, don't affectionately regard you, you are very wrong, and I am very right for feeling inclined to upbraid you. I take the pen from Robert — he would take it if I did not. We scramble a little for the pen which is to tell you this — which is to say it again and again, and be dull in the reiteration, rather than not instruct you properly, as we teach our child to do — D O G, dog; D O G, dog; D O G, dog. Says Robert, 'What a slow business!' Yet he's a quick child; and you too must be quick and comprehending, or we shall take it to heart sadly. Often I think, and we say to one another, that we belied ourselves to you in England. If you knew how, at that time, Robert was vexed and worn! — why, he was not the same even to *me!* He seemed to himself to be slipping out of waistcoats and friends at once — so worn and teased he was! But then and now believe that he loved and loves you. Set him down as a friend — as somebody

to 'rest on' after all; and don't fancy that because we are away here in the wilderness (which blossoms as a rose, to one of us at least) we may not be full of affectionate thoughts and feelings towards you in your different sort of life in London. So sorry we are — I especially, for I think I understand the grief especially — about the household troubles which you hint at and Mr. Kenyon gave us a key to. I quite understand how a whole life may seem rumpled up and creased — torn for the moment; only you will live it smooth again, dear Mr. Chorley — take courage. You have time and strength and good aims, and human beings have been happy with much less. I understate your advantages on purpose, you see. I heard you talked of in Florence when Miss Cushman, in the quarter of an hour she gave us at Casa Guidi, told us of the oath she had in heaven to bring out your play and make it a triumph. How she praised the play, and you! Twice I have spoken with her — once on a balcony on the boulevard, when together we saw Louis Napoleon enter Paris in immediate face of the empire, and that once in Florence. I like the 'manly soul' in her face and manners. Manly, not masculine — an excellent distinction of Mrs. Jameson's. By the way, we hear wonderful things of the portrait painted of Miss Cushman at Rome by Mr. Page the artist, called 'the American Titian' by the Americans. . . .

There I stop, not to 'fret' you beyond measure. Besides, now that you Czars of the 'Athenæum' have set your Faradays on us, ukase and knout, what Pole, in the deepest of the brain, would dare to have a thought on the subject? Now that Professor Faraday has 'condescended,' as the 'Literary Gazette' affectingly puts it (and the condescension is sufficiently obvious in the letter — 'how we stoop!') — now that Professor Faraday has condescended to explain the whole question — which had offered some difficulty, it is admitted, to 'hundreds of intelligent men, including five or six eminent men of science,' in Paris, and,

we may add, to thousands of unintelligent men elsewhere, including the eminent correspondent of the 'Literary Gazette' — let us all be silent for evermore. For my part, I won't say that Lord Bacon would have explained any question to a child even without feeling it to be an act of condescension. I won't hint under my breath that Lord Bacon reverenced every *fact* as a footstep of Deity, and stooped to pick up every rough, ungainly stone of a fact, though it were likely to tear and deform the smooth wallet of a theory. I, for my part, belong, you know, not to the 'eminent men of science,' nor even to the 'intelligent men,' but simply to the women, children (and poets?), and if we happen to see with our eyes a table lifted from the floor without the touch of a finger or foot, let no dog of us bark — much less a puppy-dog! The famous letter holds us gagged. What it does not hold is the facts; but, *en revanche*, the writer and his abettors know the secret of being invincible — which is, not to fight. My child proposed a donkey-race yesterday, the condition being that he should ride first. Somebody told me once that when Miss Martineau has spoken eloquently on one side of a question, she drops her ear-trumpet to give the opportunity to her adversary. Most controversies, to do justice to the world, are conducted on the same plan and terms.

What I do venture however to say is that it's *not* all over in Paris because of Faraday's letter. *Ask Lamartine.* What I hear and what the 'Literary Gazette' hears from Paris is by no means the same thing. I hear Hebrew while the 'Gazette' hears Dutch — a miracle befitting the subject, or what was once considered to be the subject (I beg Professor Faraday's pardon), before it was annihilated.

How pert women can be, can't they, Mr. Chorley? particularly when they are safe among the mountains, shut in with a row of seven plane-trees joined at top. I won't go on to offer myself as 'spiritual correspondent to the "Athenæum,"' though I have a modest conviction that it

might increase your sale considerably. Ah, tread us down! put us out! You will have some trouble with us yet. The opposition Czar of St. Petersburg supports us, be it known, and Louis Napoleon comes to us for oracles. The King of Holland is going mad gently in our favour — quite absorbed, says an informant. But I won't quote kings. It is giving oneself too great a disadvantage.

We stayed in Florence till it was oven-heat, and then we came here, where it was fire-heat for a short time, though with cool nights comparatively, by means of which we lived, comparatively too. Now it is cool by day and night. You know these beautiful hills, the green rushing river which keeps them apart, the chestnut woods, the sheep-walks and goat-walks, the villages on the peaks of the mountains like wild eagles; the fresh, unworn, uncivilised, world-before-the-flood look of everything? If you don't know it, you ought to know it. Come and know it — do! We have a spare bedroom which opens its door of itself at the thought of you, and if you can trust yourself so far from home, try for our sakes. Come and look in our faces and learn us more by heart, and see whether we are not two friends. I am so very sorry for your increased anxiety about your sister. I scarcely know how to cheer you, or, rather, to attempt such a thing, but it did strike me that she was full of life when I saw her. It may be better with her than your fears, after all. If you would come to us, you would be here in two hours from Leghorn; and there's a telegraph at Leghorn — at Florence. Think of it, do. The Storys are at the top of the hill; you know Mr. and Mrs. Story. She and I go backward and forward on donkeyback to tea-drinking and gossiping at one another's houses, and our husbands hold the reins. Also Robert and I make excursions, he walking as slowly as he can to keep up with my donkey. When the donkey trots we are more equal. The other day we were walking, and I, attracted by a

·esque sort of ladder-bridge of loose planks thrown

across the river, ventured on it, without thinking of venturing. Robert held my hand. When we were in the middle the bridge swayed, rocked backwards and forwards, and it was difficult for either of us to keep footing. A gallant colonel who was following us went down upon his hands and knees and crept. In the meantime a peasant was assuring our admiring friends that the river was deep at that spot, and that four persons had been lost from the bridge. I was so sick with fright that I could scarcely stand when all was over, never having contemplated an heroic act. 'Why, what a courageous creature you are!' said our friends. So reputations are made, Mr. Chorley.

Yes, we are doing a little work, both of us. Robert is working at a volume of lyrics, of which I have seen but a few, and those seemed to me as fine as anything he has done. We neither of us show our work to one another till it is finished. An artist must, I fancy, either find or *make* a solitude to work in, if it is to be good work at all. This for the consolation of bachelors!

I am glad you like Mr. Powers's paper. You would have 'fretted' me terribly if you had not, for I liked it myself, knowing it to be an earnest opinion and expressive of the man. I had a very interesting letter from him the other day. He is devout in his art, and the simplest of men otherwise. . . .

Now, I will ask you to write to us. It is *you* who give us up, indeed. Will your sister accept our true regards and sympathies? I shall persist in hoping to see her a little stronger next spring — or summer, rather. May God bless you. I will set myself down, and Robert with me, as

Faithfully and affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

To Miss Mitford

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
August 20 and 21, 1853.

. . . We are enjoying the mountains here, riding the donkeys in the footsteps of the sheep, and eating strawberries and milk by basins full. The strawberries succeed one another, generation after generation, throughout the summer, through growing on different aspects of the hills. If a tree is felled in the forests strawberries spring up just as mushrooms might, and the peasants sell them for just nothing. Our little Penini is wild with happiness; he asks in his prayers that God would 'mate him dood and tate him on a dontey' (make him good and take him on a donkey), so resuming all aspiration for spiritual and worldly prosperity. Then our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Story, help the mountains to please us a good deal. He is the son of Judge Story, the biographer of his father, and, for himself, sculptor and poet; and she a sympathetic, graceful woman, fresh and innocent in face and thought. We go backwards and forwards to tea and talk at one another's houses. Last night they were our visitors, and your name came in among the Household Gods to make us as agreeable as might be. We were considering your expectations about Mr. Hawthorne. 'All right,' says Mr. Story, '*except the rare half hours*' (of eloquence). He represents Mr. Hawthorne as not silent only by shyness, but by nature and inaptitude. He is a man, it seems, who talks wholly and exclusively with the pen, and who does not open out socially with his most intimate friends any more than with strangers. It isn't his *way* to converse. That has been a characteristic of some men of genius before him, you know, but you will be nevertheless disappointed, very surely. Also, Mr. Story does not imagine that you will get anything from him on the subject of the 'manifestations.' You have read the

'Blithedale Romance,' and are aware of his opinion expressed there? He evidently recognised them as a sort of scurvy spirits, good to be slighted, because of their disreputableness. By the way, I heard read the other day a very interesting letter from Paris, from Mr. Appleton, Longfellow's brother-in-law, who is said to be a man of considerable ability, and who is giving himself wholly just now to the investigation of this spirit-subject, termed by him the 'sublimest conundrum ever given to the world for guessing.' He appears still in doubt whether the intelligence is external, or whether the phenomena are not produced by an *unconscious projection in the medium of a second personality accompanied with clairvoyance, and attended by physical manifestations*. This seems to me to double the difficulty; yet the idea is entertained as a doubtful sort of hypothesis by such men as Sir Edward Lytton and others. *Imposture* is absolutely out of the question, be certain, as an ultimate solution, and a greater proof of credulity can scarcely be given than a belief in imposture as things are at present. But I was going to tell you Mr. Appleton has a young American friend in Paris, who, 'besides being a very sweet girl,' says he, 'is a strong medium.' By Lamartine's desire he took her to the poet's house; 'all the phenomena were reproduced, and everybody present convinced,' Lamartine himself 'in ecstasies.' Among other spirits came Henry Clay, who said, 'J'aime Lamartine.' We shall have it in the next volume of biography. Louis Napoleon gets oracles from the 'raps,' and it is said that the Czar does the same,—your Emperor, certainly,—and the King of Holland is allowing the subject to absorb him. 'Dying out! dying out!' Our accounts from New York are very different, but unbelieving persons are apt to stop their ears and exclaim, 'We hear nothing now.' On one occasion the Hebrew Professor at New York was addressed in Hebrew to his astonishment.

Well, I don't believe, with all my credulity, in poets

being perfected at universities. What can be more absurd than this proposition of 'finishing' Alexander Smith at Oxford or Cambridge? We don't know how to deal with literary genius in England, certainly. We are apt to treat poets (when we condescend to treat them at all) as over-masculine papas do babies; and Monckton Milnes was accused of only touching his in order to poke out its eyes, for instance. Why not put this new poet in a public library? There are such situations even among us, and something of the kind was done for Patmore. The very judgment Tennyson gave of him, *in the very words*, we had given here — 'fancy, not imagination.' Also, imagery in excess; thought in deficiency. Still, the new poet is a true poet, and the defects obvious in him may be summed up in *youth* simply. Let us wait and see. I have read him only in extracts, such as the reviews give, and such as a friend helped me to by good-natured MS. It is extraordinary to me that with his amount of development, as far as I understand it, he has met with so much rapid recognition. Tell me if you have read 'Queechy,' the American book — novel — by Elizabeth Wetherell? I think it very clever and characteristic. Mrs. Beecher Stowe scarcely exceeds it, after all the trumpets. We are about to have a visit from Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's only son — only child now. Did I tell you that he was a poet — yes, and of an unquestionable faculty. I expect much from him one day, when he shakes himself clear of the poetical influences of the age, which he will have strength to do presently. He thinks as well as sees, and that is good. . . .

Oh yes! I like Mr. Kingsley. I am glad he spoke kindly of *us*, because really I like him and admire him. Few people have struck me as much as he did last year in England. 'Manly,' do you say? But I am not very fond of praising men by calling them *manly*. I hate and detest a masculine man. *Humanly* bold, brave, true, direct, Mr. Kingsley is — a moral cordiality and an original intellect uniting in him.

I did not see *her* and the children, but I hope we shall be in better fortune next time.

Since I began this letter the Storys and ourselves have had a grand donkey-excursion to a village called Benabbia, and the cross above it on the mountain-peak. We returned in the dark, and were in some danger of tumbling down various precipices; but the scenery was exquisite — past speaking of for beauty. Oh those jagged mountains, rolled together like pre-Adamite beasts, and setting their teeth against the sky! It was wonderful. You may as well guess at a lion by a lady's lapdog as at Nature by what you see in England. All honour to England, lanes and meadow-land, notwithstanding; to the great trees above all. Will you write to me sooner? Will you give me the details of yourself? Will you love me?

Your most affectionate

BA.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
August 30, [1853].

Dearest Fanny, — On your principle that 'there's too much to say,' I ought not to think of writing to you these three months; you have pleased me and made me grateful to such an extremity by your most pretty and graceful illustrative outlines. The death-bed I admire particularly; the attitudes are very expressive, and the open window helps the sentiment. What am I to say for your kindness in holding a torch of this kind (perfumed for the 'nobilities') between the wind and my poems? Thank you, thank you. And when that's said, I ought to stop short and beg you, dear Fanny, not to waste yourself in more labour of this kind, seeing that I am accursed and that nothing is to be done with my books and me, as far as my public is concerned. Why not get up a book of your own, a collection of 'outlines' illustrative of everybody's poems, which would

stand well on its own feet and make a circle for itself? Think of *that* rather. For my part, there's nothing to be done with me, as I said; that is, there's nothing to be done with my publishers, who just do as they like with my books, and don't like to do much good for *me* with them, whatever they may do for themselves. I am misanthropical in respect to the booksellers. They manage one as they please, and not at all to please one. I have no more to say to the fate of my books than you have — and not much more to pocket. This third edition, for instance, which should have been out four or five months ago, they are keeping, I suppose, for the millennium, encouraged probably by the spiritual manifestations; and *my* personal manifestations meanwhile have as much weight with them as facts have with Faraday, or the theory of fair play with the London 'Athenæum.' I am sick of it all, indeed. I look down on it all as the epicurean gods do on the world without putting out a finger to save an empire; perhaps because they can't. Long live the ——, who are kings of us. It's the best thing possible, I conclude, in this best of possible social economies, though for ourselves individually it may not be a very good thing; not precisely what we should choose. Think of the separate book of outlines. Seriously, Robert and I recommend you to consider it. You might make a book for drawing-room tables which would be generally acceptable if not too expensive. And Mr. Spicer is bringing me more? How kind of you. And when is he coming? Scarcely could anyone come as a stranger whom I desire more to see, and I do hope he will bring me facts and fantasies too on the great subject which is interesting me so deeply. His book of 'Sights and Sounds' we have read, but the new book has not penetrated to us. 'Sights and Sounds' is very curious, and the authenticity of its facts has been confirmed to me by various testimonies, but the author is too clever for his position; I mean too full of flash and wit. There's an air of levity, and of effective writing, without which the book

would have been more impressive and convincing; don't you think so? And here we get to the heart of most of the difficulties of the subject. Why do we make no quicker advances, do you say? Why are our communications chiefly trivial? Why, but because we ourselves are trivial, and don't bring serious souls and concentrated attentions and holy aspirations to the spirits who are waiting for these things? Spirit comes to spirit by affinity, says Swedenborg; but our cousinship is not with the high and noble. We try experiments from curiosity, just as children play with the loadstone; our ducks swim, but they don't get beyond that, and *won't*, unless we do better. To prove what I say, consider what you say yourself, that you couldn't manage to draw the same persons together again (these very persons being persuaded of the verity of the spiritual communications they were in reach of) on account of the difficulties of the London season. Difficulties of the London season! The inconsequence of human nature is more wonderful to me than the ingress of any spirits could be. This instance is scarcely credible. . . .

I had a letter the other day from Mr. Chorley, and he was chivalrous enough (I call it real chivalry in his state of opinion) to deliver to me a message from Mr. Westland Marston, whom he met at Folkestone, and who kindly proposes to write a full account to me of his own spiritual experiences, having heard from you that they were likely to interest me; I mean that I was interested in the whole subject. Will you tell him from me that I shall be most thankful for anything he will vouchsafe to write to me, and will you give him my address? I don't know where to find him, and Mr. Chorley is on the Continent wandering. I have seen nothing for myself, but I am a believer upon testimony; and a stream of Americans running through Florence, and generally making way to us, the testimony has been various and strong. Interested in the subject! Who can be uninterested in the subject? Even Robert is

interested, who professes to be a sceptic, an infidel indeed (though I can swear to having seen him considerably shaken more than once), and who promises never to believe till he has experience by his own senses. Isn't it hard on me that I can't draw a spirit into our circle and convince him? He would give much, he says, to find it true. . . .

Here an end. Write soon and write much.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B. (called Ba).

Our child was gathering box leaves in a hedge the other day (wherever we have a hedge, it's box, I would have you to understand), and pulled a yellow flower by mistake. Down he flung it as if it stung him. 'Ah, brutto! Colore Tedesco!' Think of that baby!

To Mr. Westwood

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
September [1853].

As to Patmore's new volume of poems, my husband and I had the pleasure of reading in MS. the poem which gives its title to the book. He has a great deal of thought and poetry in him. Alexander Smith I know by copious extracts in reviews, and by some MSS. once sent to us by friends and readers. Judging from those he must be set down as a true poet in opulence of imagery, but defective, so far (he is said to be very young) in the intellectual part of poetry. His images are flowers thrown to him by the gods, beautiful and fragrant, but having no root either in Enna or Olympus. There's no unity and holding together, no reality properly so called, no thinking of any kind. I hear that Alfred Tennyson says of him: 'He has fancy without imagination.' Still, it is difficult to say at the dawn what may be written at noon. Certainly he is very rich and full of colour; nothing is more surprising to me than his

favourable reception with the critics. I should have thought that his very merits would be against him.

If you can read novels, and you have too much sense not to be fond of them, read 'Villette.' The scene of the greater part of it is in Belgium, and I think it a strong book. 'Ruth,' too, by Mrs. Gaskell, the author of 'Mary Barton,' has pleased me very much. Do you know the French novels? there's passion and power for you, if you like such things. Balzac convinced me that the French language was malleable into poetry. We are behindhand here in books, and elderly ones seem young to us. For instance, we have not caught sight yet of 'Moore's Life,' the extracts from which are unpropitious, I think. I had a fancy, I cannot tell you how it grew, that Moore, though an artificial, therefore inferior, poet, was a most brilliant letter-writer. His letters are disappointing, and his mean clinging to the aristocracy still more so.

I wish you could suddenly walk into this valley, which seems to have been made by the flashing scimitar of the river that cuts through the mountain. Ah! you in England, and in Belgium still less, do not know what scenery is, what Nature is when she is natural. You could as soon guess at a tiger from the cat on the hearthstone. You do not know; but, being a poet, you can dream. You have divine insights, as we all have, of heaven, all of us with whom the mortal mind does not cake and obstruct into cecity. No, no, no. I protest against anything I have not reprinted. The Prometheus poems bear the mark of their time, which was one of greenness and immaturity. Indeed, the responsibility for what I *acknowledge* in print is hard enough to bear. Don't put another stick on the overloaded — *ass*, shall I say candidly?

To Mrs. Martin

Bagni di Lucca: October 5, [1853].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am delighted to have your letter at last, and should have come upon you like a storm in a day or two if you hadn't written, for really I began to be low in patience. Also, after having spent the summer here, we were about to turn our faces to Florence again, and it was necessary to my own satisfaction to let you know of our plans for the winter. To begin with those, then, we go to Florence, as I said, from hence, and after a week or two, or three or four as it may be, the briefer time if we let our house, we proceed to Rome for some months. You see we *must* visit Rome before we go northwards, and northwards we *must* go in the spring, so that the logic of events seems to secure Rome to us this time; otherwise I should still doubt of our going there, so often have we been on the verge and caught back. . . .

So you think that he[1] is looking 'less young than formerly,' and that 'we should all learn to hear and make such remarks with equanimity.' Now, once for all, let me tell you — confess to you — I never, if I live to be a hundred, should learn that learning. Death has the luminous side when we know how to look; but the rust of time, the touch of age, is hideous and revolting to me, and I never see it, by even a line's breadth, in the face of any I love, without pain and recoil of nature. I have a worse than womanly weakness about that class of subjects. Death is a face-to-face intimacy; age, a thickening of the mortal mask between souls. So I hate it; put it far from me. Why talk of age, when it's just an appearance, an accident, when we are all young in soul and heart? We don't say, one to another, 'You are freckled in the forehead to-day,' or 'There's a yellow shade in your complexion.' Leave those disagreeable

[1] Mr. George Barrett. The omitted passage describes an act of generosity by him to one of his younger brothers.

trifles. I, for my part, never felt younger. Did *you*, I wonder? To be sure not. Also, I have a gift in my eyes, I think, for scarcely ever does it strike me that anybody is altered, except my child, for instance, who certainly is larger than when he was born. When I went to England after five years' absence, everybody (save one) appeared to me younger than I was used to conceive of them, and of course I took for granted that I appeared to them in the same light. Be sure that it is highly moral to be young as long as possible. Women who throw up the game early (or even late) and wear dresses 'suitable to their years' (that is, as hideous as possible), are a disgrace to their sex, aren't they now? And women and men with statistical memories, who are always quoting centuries and the years thereof ('Do you remember in '20?' *As if anybody could*), are the pests of society. And, in short, and for my part, whatever honours of authorship may ever befall me, I hope I may be safe from the epithet which distinguishes the Venerable Bede.

Now, if I had written this from Paris, you would have cried out upon the frivolity I had picked up. Who would imagine that I had just finished a summer of mountain solitude, succeeding a winter's meditation on Swedenborg's philosophy, and that such fruit was of it all? By the way, tell me how it was that Paris did harm to Moore? Mentally, was it, and morally, or in the matter of the body? I have not seen the biography yet. Italy keeps us behind in new books. But the extracts given in newspapers displease me through the ignoble tone of 'doing honour to the lord,' which is anything but religious. Also, the letters seem somewhat less brilliant than I expected from Moore; but it must be, after all, a most entertaining book. Tell me if you have read Mrs. Gaskell's 'Ruth.' That's a novel which I much admire. It is strong and healthy at once, teaching a moral frightfully wanted in English society. Such an interesting letter I had from Mrs. Gaskell a few days ago — simple, worthy of 'Ruth.' By the way 'Ruth' is a great

advance on 'Mary Barton,' don't you think so? 'Villette,' too (Jane Eyre's), is very powerful.

Since we have been here we have had for a visitor (drawing the advantage from our spare room) Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's only son, who is attaché at the Florence Legation at this time. He lost nothing from the test of house-intimacy with either of us — gained, in fact, much. Full of all sorts of good and nobleness he really is, and gifted with high faculties and given to the highest aspirations — not vulgar ambitions, understand — he will never be a great diplomatist, nor fancy himself an inch taller for being master of Knebworth.[1] Then he is somewhat dreamy and unpractical, we must confess; he won't do for drawing carts under any sort of discipline. Such a summer we have enjoyed here, free from burning heats and mosquitos — the two drawbacks of Italy — and in the heart of the most enchanting scenery. Mountains not too grand for exquisite verdure, and just kept from touching by the silver finger of a stream. I have been donkey-riding, and so has Wiedeman. I even went (to prove to you how well I am) the great excursion to Prato Fiorito, six miles there and six miles back, perpendicularly up and down. Oh, it almost slew me of course! I could not stir for days after. But who wouldn't see heaven and die? Such a vision of divine scenery, such as, in England, the best dreamers do not dream of! As we came near home I said to Mr. Lytton, who was on horseback, 'I am dying. How are you?' To which he answered, 'I thought a quarter of an hour ago I could not keep up to the end, but now I feel better.' This from a young man just one-and-twenty! He is delicate, to be sure, but still you may imagine that the day's work was not commonly fatiguing. The guides had to lead the horses and donkeys. It was like going up and down a wall, without the smoothness. No road except in the beds of

[1] Hardly a successful horoscope of the future Ambassador at Paris and Viceroy of India.

torrents. Robert pretended to be not tired, but, of course (as sensible people say of the turning tables), nobody believed a word of it. It was altogether a supernatural pretension, and very impertinent in these enlightened days.

Mr. and Mrs. Story were of our party. He is the son of Judge Story and full of all sorts of various talent. And she is one of those cultivated and graceful American women who take away the reproach of the national want of refinement. We have seen much of them throughout the summer. There has been a close communion of tea-drinking between the houses, and as we are all going to Rome together, this pleasure is not a past one. . . .

We still point to Paris. Ah! you disapprove of Paris, I see, but we must try the experiment. What I am afraid of is simply the climate. I doubt whether I shall stand two winters running as far north as Paris, but if I *can't*, we must come south again. Then I love Italy. Oh! if it were not for the distance between Italy and England, we should definitively settle here at once. We shall be in England, by the way, next summer for pleasure and business, having, or about to have, two books to see through the press. Not *prose*, Mr. Martin. I'm lost — devoted to the infernal gods of rhyming. 'It's my fate,' as a popular poet said when going to be married. . . .

(We go on Monday. Write to Florence for the next month.)

To Miss Browning

[Florence: autumn, 1853.]

My dearest Sarianna, — I shall not be able to write very much to-day, for Robert is in haste, and we are both overwhelmed with different engagements, the worst of which have been forced on me *maritally* rather than artistically by the portrait-sittings he of course has told you of. His own portrait, by Mr. Reade, I must be glad about, seeing that though it by no means gives his best expression, the face is

there, and it will be the best work extant on the same subject. I only wish that the artist had been satisfied with it, or taken my Penini in the second place instead of me, who am not wanted in canvas for art's sake, or for any other sake in the world. When gone from hence, may nobody think of me again, except when one or two may think perhaps how I loved them. . . .

Do you think much of the war? I hope all will be done on the part of the two western Powers honestly and directly; and then, may the best that can, come out of the worst that must be. The poor Italians catch like men in an agony at all these floating straws. We hear that the new Austrian Commandant has received instructions to hold no intercourse with members of the English and French Legations till further orders are received.

We have lived a disturbed life lately; too much coming and going even with agreeable people. There has been no time for work. In Rome it must be different, or we shall get on poorly with our books, I think. Robert seems, however, by his account, to be in an advanced state already. . . .

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Casa Guidi: Saturday [about October, 1853].

My dearest Isa,— . . . I was very sorry on returning from Lucca to find only Mr. Thompson's note and yours; but though we missed him at Florence we shall see him at Rome, I hope. There was also a card from Miss Lynch,[1] an American poetess (one of the ninety-and-nine muses), with a note of introduction from England. Do you hear of her at Rome? The 'Ninth Street' printed on her card leaves me in the infinite as far as conjectures of where she is go.

[1] Afterwards wife of Signor Carlo Botta, an Italian man of letters, with whom she returned to America and lived in New York.

So pleased I am to get back to Florence, and so little inclined to tumble out of my nest again; yet we *shall go to Rome* if some new obstacle does not arise. We have had no glimpse of the Tassinaris; they seem to have vanished from the scene. Florence is full of great people, so called, from England, and the *real sommités* are coming, such as Alfred Tennyson, and, with an interval, Dickens and Thackeray. The two latter go to Rome for the winter, I understand.

Do you say *Edward Lytton?* But he isn't Edward Lytton now — he is Robert. The two Edwards clashed inconveniently, and now he doesn't sign an Edward even by an initial; he has renounced the name, and is a Robert for evermore. I am glad to tell you that although he is delicate and excitable there seems to me no tendency to disease of any kind. Indeed, he is looking particularly well just now. He is full of sensibility, both intellectually and morally, which is scarcely favorable to health and long life; but in the long run, if people can run, they get over such a disadvantage. At this time he is about to publish a collection of poems. I think highly of his capabilities; and he is a great favorite with both of us for various excellent reasons. Did I tell you of his passing a fortnight with us at Lucca, and how sorry we were to lose him at last? Sir Edward either has just brought out, or is bringing out, a volume of poems of his own, called 'Cornflowers' (referring to the harvest time of maturity in which he produces them), and chiefly of a metaphysical character. His son, who has seen the manuscript, thinks them the best of his poems. 'My Novel' is certainly excellent. Did I tell you that I had seized and read it?

I shall get at Swedenborg in Rome, and get on with my readings. There are deep truths, in him, I cannot doubt, though I can't receive *everything*, which may be my fault. I would fain speak with a wise humility. We will talk on these things and the spirits. How that last subject attracts

me! It strikes me that we are on the verge of great developments of the spiritual nature, and that in a philosophical point of view (apart from ulterior ends) the facts are worthy of all admiration and meditation. If a spiritual influx, it is *mixed* — good and evil together. The fact of there being a mixture of evil justifies Swedenborg's philosophy (does it not?) without concluding against the movement generally. We were at the Pergola the other night, and heard the 'Trovatore,' Verdi's new work. Very passionate and dramatic, surely. The Storys are here on their way back to Rome. Oh, I mean to convert you, Isa! Is it true that the fever at Rome is still raging? Give my love to your dear invalid, who must be comforting you so much with her improvement. Penini is in a chronic state of packing up his desk to go to '*Bome*.' Robert's love with mine as ever. I can't write either legibly or otherwise than stupidly on this detestable paper, having never learnt to skate. Are we giving you too much trouble, dearest, kind Isa?

Your affectionate friend

E. B. B.

After a few weeks only at Florence the Brownings moved on to Rome, and there (at No. 43 Via Bocca di Leone) they passed the winter. Both were now actively engaged on their new volumes of poetry — Mr. Browning on his 'Men and Women,' Mrs. Browning on 'Aurora Leigh,' both of which were, however, still far from completion.

To Mrs. Jameson

Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: December 21, 1853.

My dearest Mona Nina, — I have been longer than I thought to be in Rome without writing to you, especially when I have a letter of yours for which to thank you. My fancy was to wait till I had seen Gerardine in her own home, and then to write to you, but I have called on her three times, and the three Fates have been at it each time to

prevent my getting in. Still, we have met *here*, and I would rather not wait any longer for whatever might be added to what I have seen and know already. . . .

Ah, dearest friend! you have heard how our first step into Rome was a fall, not into a catacomb but a fresh grave,[1] and how everything here has been slurred and blurred to us, and distorted from the grand antique associations. I protest to you I doubt whether I shall get over it, and whether I ever shall feel that this is Rome. The first day at the bed's head of that convulsed and dying child; and the next two, three, four weeks in great anxiety about his little sister, who was all but given up by the physicians; the English nurse horribly ill of the same fever, and another case in the house. It was not only sympathy. I was selfishly and intensely frightened for my own treasures; I wished myself at the end of the world with Robert and Penini twenty times a day. Rome has been very peculiarly unhealthy; and I heard a Monsignore observe the other morning that there would not be much truce to the fever till March came. Still, I begin to take breath again and be reasonable. Penini's cheeks are red as apples, and if we avoid the sun, and the wind, and the damp, and, above all, if God takes care of us, we shall do excellently. *I*, of course, am in a flourishing condition; walk out nearly every day and scarcely cough at all. Which isn't enough for me, you see. Dear friend, we have not set foot in the Vatican. Oh, barbarians!

But we have seen Mrs. Kemble, and I am as enchanted as I ought to be, and even, perhaps, a little more. She has been very kind and gracious to me; she was to have spent an evening with us three days since, but something intervened. I am much impressed by her as well as attracted to her. What a voice, what eyes, what eyelids full of utterance!

[1] This refers to the death of the infant child of the Storys, with whom Mr. and Mrs. Browning were on intimate terms of friendship, as the previous letters show.

Then we have had various visits from Mr. Thackeray and his daughters. 'She writes to me of Thackeray instead of Raffael, and she is at Rome'! But she *isn't* at Rome. There's the sadness of it. We got to Gibson's studio, which is close by, and saw his coloured Venus. I don't like her. She has come out of her cloud of the ideal, and to my eyes is not too decent. Then in the long and slender throat, in the turn of it, and the setting on of the head, you have rather a grisette than a goddess. 'Tis over pretty and *petite*, the colour adding, of course, to this effect. Crawford's studio (the American sculptor) was far more interesting to me than Gibson's. By the way, Mr. Page's portrait of Miss Cushman is really something wonderful — soul and body together. You can show nothing like it in England, take for granted. Indeed, the American artists consider themselves a little aggrieved when you call it as good as a Titian. '*Did* Titian ever produce anything like it?' said an admirer in my hearing. Critics wonder whether the colour will *stand*. It is a theory of this artist that time does not *tone*, and that Titian's pictures were painted as we see them. The consequence of which is that his (Page's) pictures are undertoned in the first instance, and if they change at all will turn black.[1] May all Boston rather turn black, which it may do one of these days by an eruption from the South, when 'Uncle Tomison' gets strong enough.

We have been to St. Peter's; we have stood in the Forum and seen the Colosseum. Penini says: 'The sun has tome out. I think God knows I want to go out to walk, and *so* He has sent the sun out.' There's a child who has faith enough to put us all to shame. A vision of angels wouldn't startle him in the least. When his poor little friend died, and we had to tell him, he inquired, fixing

[1] According to Mr. R. B. Browning, this is practically what has happened with Page's portrait of Robert Browning (now in Venice). The surface has become thick and waxy, and the portrait has almost disappeared.

on me those earnest blue eyes, 'Did papa *see* the angels when they took away Joe?' And when I answered 'No' (for I never try to deceive him by picturesque fictions, I should not dare, I tell him simply what I believe myself), 'Then did Joe *go up* by himself?' In a moment there was a burst of cries and sobs. The other day he asked me if I thought *Joe had seen the Dute of Wellyton.* He has a medal of the Duke of Wellington, which put the name into his head. By-the-bye, Robert yesterday, in a burst of national vanity, informed the child that this was the man who beat Napoleon. 'Then I sint he a velly naughty man. What! he beat Napoleon *wiz a stit?*' (with a stick). Imagine how I laughed, and how Robert himself couldn't help laughing. So, the seraphs judge our glories!

If you have seen Sir David Brewster lately I should like to know whether he has had more experience concerning the tables, and has modified his conclusions in any respect. I myself am convinced as I can be of any fact, that there is an *external intelligence;* the little I have seen is conclusive to me. And this makes me more anxious that the subject should be examined with common fairness by learned persons. Only the learned won't learn — that's the worst of them. Their hands are too full to gather simples. It seems to me a new development of law in the human constitution, which has worked before in exceptional cases, but now works in general.

Dearest friend, I do not speak of your own anxious watch and tender grief, but think of them deeply. Believe that I love you always and in all truth.

Your

E. B. B.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: December 27, [1853].

My dearest Fanny, — I can't judge of your 'obstacles,' of course, but as to your being snowed up on the road or

otherwise impeded between Rome and Civita (Castellana or Vecchia), there's certainly not room for even a dream of it. There has been beautiful weather here ever since we came, except for exacting invalids. I, for instance, have been kept in the house for a fortnight or more (till Christmas Day, when I was able to get to St. Peter's) by tramontana; but there has been sun on *most* days of cold, and nothing has been *severe* as cold. The hard weather came in November, before we arrived. I was out yesterday, and may be to-day, perhaps. 'Judge ye!' . . .

You bid me write. But to what end, if you are here on New Year's Day? There's not time for a letter.

And at first I intended not to write, till beginning to consider how, as you are not actually of the race of Medes and Persians, you might possibly so modify your plans as to be able to receive these lines. Oh, a provoking person or persons you are, since you and Ellen Heaton are plural henceforth! No, I won't include her. *You* are *singular*, by your own confession, on this occasion. And, instead of Christmas solemnisations, I shall take to reading the Commination Service over you if you stay any longer at Florence because of the impracticable, snowed-up roads around Rome. You really might as well object to coming on account of the heat! . . .

I thank you very much for meaning to bring my goods for me. I wish I could have seen your pictures before they took to themselves golden wings and fled away. Is it true, really, that you think to exhibit in London Penini's portrait at the piano, as Sophie Eckley tells me? I shall like to hear that you succeed in that.

I see *her* every day almost, if not quite. Nobody is like her. And there are quantities of people here to choose from. I have not taken heart and 'an evening for reception' yet, but we have had '*squeezes*' of more or less stringency. Miss Ogle is here — and her family, of course, for she is young — the author of 'A Lost Love,' that very

pretty book; and she is natural and pleasing. Do you know Lady Oswald, and her daughter and son? She is Lady Elgin's sister-in-law, and brought a letter to me from Lady Augusta Bruce. Then the Marshalls found us out through Mr. De Vere (*her* cousin), and in the name of Alfred Tennyson (their intimate friend). Mrs. Marshall was a Miss Spring Rice, and is very refined in all senses. Refinement expresses the whole woman. Yes, there are some nice people here — nice people; it's the word. Nobody as near to me as Mr. Page, whom we often see, I am happy to say, and who has just presented the world (only *that* is generally said of the lady) with a *son*, and is on the point of presenting said world with a Venus. *Will* you come to see? I wonder. . . .

I want you here to see a portrait taken of me in chalks by Miss Fox. I said 'No' to her in London, which was my sole reason for saying 'Yes' to her in Rome, when she asked me for a patient — or victim. She draws well, and has been very successful with the hair at least. For the likeness you shall judge for yourself. She comes here for an hour in the morning to execute me, and I'm as well as can be expected under it. . . .

May God bless you, dearest Fanny. What Christmas wishes warm from the heart by heartfuls I throw at you! And say to Ellen Heaton, with cordial love, that I thank her much for her kind letter, and remember her in all affectionate wishes made for friends. I shall write to Mr. Ruskin. *Don't* get this letter, I say.

Your

E. B. B.

Robert's love, and *Penini's*. If 'Fanny' strikes you, 'Madame Bovary' will thunder-strike you.

To Miss Mitford

43 Via di Leone, Rome: January 7, 18[54].

It is long, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, since I wrote to you last, but since we came to Rome we have had troubles, out of the deep pit of which I was unwilling to write to you, lest the shadows of it should cleave as blots to my pen. Then one day followed another, and one day's work was laid on another's shoulders. Well, we are all well, to begin with, and have been well; our troubles came to us through sympathy entirely. A most exquisite journey of eight days we had from Florence to Rome, seeing the great monastery and triple church of Assisi and the wonderful Terni by the way — that passion of the waters which makes the human heart seem so still. In the highest spirits we entered Rome, Robert and Penini singing actually; for the child was radiant and flushed with the continual change of air and scene, and he had an excellent scheme about 'tissing the Pope's foot,' to prevent his taking away 'mine gun,' somebody having told him that such dangerous weapons were not allowed by the Roman police. You remember my telling you of our friends the Storys — how they and their two children helped to make the summer go pleasantly at the baths of Lucca? They had taken an apartment for us in Rome, so that we arrived in comfort to lighted fires and lamps as if coming home, and we had a glimpse of their smiling faces that evening. In the morning, before breakfast, little Edith was brought over to us by the manservant with a message — 'The boy was in convulsions; there was danger.' We hurried to the house, of course, leaving Edith with Wilson. Too true! All that first day was spent beside a death-bed; for the child never rallied, never opened his eyes in consciousness, and by eight in the evening he was gone. In the meanwhile, Edith was taken ill at our house — could not be moved, said the physicians.

We had no room for her, but a friend of the Storys on the floor immediately below — Mr. Page, the artist — took her in and put her to bed. Gastric fever, with a tendency to the brain, and within two days her life was almost despaired of; exactly the same malady as her brother's. Also the English nurse was apparently dying at the Storys' house, and Emma Page, the artist's youngest daughter, sickened with the same symptoms. Now you will not wonder that, after the first absorbing flow of sympathy, I fell into a selfish human panic about my child. Oh, I 'lost my head,' said Robert; and if I *could* have caught him up in my arms and run to the ends of the world, the hooting after me of all Rome could not have stopped me. I wished — how I wished! — for the wings of a dove, or any unclean bird, to fly away with him to be at peace. But there was no possibility but to stay; also the physicians assured me solemnly that there was no contagion possible, otherwise I would have at least sent him from us to another house. To pass over this dreary time, I will tell you at once that the three patients recovered; only in poor little Edith's case Roman fever followed the gastric, and has persisted so, ever since, in periodical recurrence, that she is very pale and thin. Roman fever is not dangerous to life — simple fever and ague — but it is exhausting if not cut off, and the quinine fails sometimes. For three or four days now she has been free from the symptoms, and we are beginning to hope. Now you will understand at once what ghastly flakes of death have changed the sense of Rome to me. The first day by a death-bed! The first drive out to the cemetery, where poor little Joe is laid close to Shelley's heart (*Cor cordium*, says the epitaph), and where the mother insisted on going when she and I went out in the carriage together. I am horribly weak about such things. I can't look on the earth-side of death; I flinch from corpses and graves, and never meet a common funeral without a sort of horror. When I look deathwards I look *over* death, and

upwards, or I can't look that way at all. So that it was a struggle with me to sit upright in that carriage in which the poor stricken mother sate so calmly — not to drop from the seat, which would have been worse than absurd of me. Well, all this has blackened Rome to me. I can't think about the Cæsars in the old strain of thought; the antique words get muddled and blurred with warm dashes of modern, every-day tears and fresh grave-clay. Rome is spoiled to me — there's the truth. Still, one lives through one's associations when not too strong, and I have arrived at almost enjoying some things — the climate, for instance, which, though perilous to the general health, agrees particularly with me, and the sight of the blue sky floating like a sea-tide through the great gaps and rifts of ruins. We read in the papers of a tremendously cold winter in England and elsewhere, while I am able on most days to walk out as in an English summer, and while we are all forced to take precautions against the sun. Also Robert is well, and our child has not dropped a single rose-leaf from his radiant cheeks. We are very comfortably settled in rooms turned to the sun, and do work and play by turns — having almost too many visitors — hear excellent music at Mrs. Sartoris's (Adelaide Kemble) once or twice a week, and have Fanny Kemble to come and talk to us with the doors shut, we three together. This is pleasant. I like her decidedly. If anybody wants small-talk by handfuls of glittering dust swept out of salons, here's Mr. Thackeray besides; and if anybody wants a snow-man to match Southey's snow-woman (see 'Thalaba'), here's Mr. Lockhart, who, in complexion, hair, conversation, and manners, might have been made out of one of your English '*drifts*' — 'sixteen feet deep in some places,' says Galignani. Also, here's your friend *V.* — Mrs. Archer Clive.[1] We were at her house the other evening. She seems good-natured, but what a very peculiar person as to looks, and even voice and general

[1] Author of 'IX. Poems, by V.' (1840).

bearing; and what a peculiar unconsciousness of peculiarity. I do not know her much. I go out very little in the evening, both from fear of the night air and from disinclination to stir. Mr. Page, our neighbour downstairs, pleases me much, and you ought to know more of him in England, for his portraits are like Titian's — flesh, blood, and soul. I never saw such portraits from a living hand. He professes to have discovered secrets, and plainly *knows* them, from his wonderful effects of colour on canvas — not merely in words. His portrait of Miss Cushman is a miracle. Gibson's famous painted Venus is very pretty — that's my criticism. Yes, I will say besides that I have seldom, if ever, seen so indecent a statue. The colouring with an approximation to flesh tints produces that effect, to my apprehension. I don't like this statue-colouring — no, not at all.

Dearest Miss Mitford, will you write to me? I don't ask for a long letter, but a letter — a letter. And I entreat you not to *prepay*. Among other disadvantages, that prepaying tendency of yours may lose me a letter one day. I want much to hear how you are bearing the winter — how you are. Give me details about your dear self.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mr. Westwood

43 Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: February 2, [1854].

Thank you, my dear Mr. Westwood, for your kind defence of me against the stupid, blind, cur-dog backbiting of the American writer. I will tell you. Three weeks ago I had a letter from my brother, apprising me of what had been said, and pressing on me the propriety of a contradiction in form. Said I in reply: 'When you marry a wife, George, take her from the class of those who have never printed a book, if this thing vexes you. A woman in a crowd can't help the pushing up against her of dirty coats; happy if somebody in boots does not tread upon her toes!'

Words to that effect, I said. I really could not do the American the honour of sitting down at the table with him to say: 'Sir, you are considerably mistaken.' He was not only mistaken, you see, but so stupid and self-willed in his mistake, so determined to make a system of it, that he was too disreputable to set right. Also of the tendency of one's writings one's readers are the best judges. I don't profess to write a religious commentary on my writings. I am content to stand by the obvious meaning of what I have written, according to the common sense of the general reader.

The tendency of my writings to Swedenborgianism has been observed by others, though I had read Swedenborg, when I wrote most of them, as little as the American editor of 'Robert Hall' can have done, and less can't be certainly. Otherwise, the said editor would have known that the central doctrine of Swedenborgianism being the Godhead of Jesus Christ, no Unitarian, liberal or unliberal, could have produced works Swedenborgian in character, and that William and Mary Howitt being Unitarian (which I believe they are) couldn't have a tendency at the same time to Swedenborgianism, unless it should be possible for them to be bolt upright with a leaning to the floor. I speak to a wise man. Judge what I say. For my own part I have thought freely on most subjects, and upon the state of the Churches among others, but never at any point of my life, and now, thank God, least of all, have I felt myself drawn towards Unitarian opinions. I should throw up revelation altogether if I ceased to recognise Christ as divine. Sectarianism I do not like, even in the form of a State Church, and the Athanasian way of stating opinions, between a scholastic paradox and a curse, is particularly distasteful to me. But I hold to Christ's invisible Church as referred to in Scripture, and to the Saviour's humanity and divinity as they seem to me conspicuous in Scripture, and so you have done me justice and the American has done me injustice. . . .

Well, I have seen your Mrs. Brotherton, only once, though, because she can't come to see me at all, and lives too far for me to go in the winter weather. I shall see more of her presently, I hope, and in the meantime she is very generous to me, and sends me violets, and notes that are better, and we have a great sympathy on the spiritual subjects which set you so in a passion. What do I say? She sends me Greek (of which she does not know a single character), written by her, or rather *through* her; mystical Greek, from a spirit-world, produced by her hands, she herself not knowing what she writes. The character is beautifully written, and the separate words are generally correct — such words as 'Christ,' 'God,' 'tears,' 'blood,' 'tempest,' 'sea,' 'thunder,' 'calm,' 'morning,' 'sun,' 'joy.' No grammatical construction hitherto, but a significant sort of grouping of the separate words, as if the meaning were struggling out into coherence. My idea is that she is being exercised in the language, in the *character*, in order to fuller expression hereafter. Well, you would have us snowed upon with poppies till we sleep and forget these things. I, on the contrary, would have our eyes wide open, our senses 'all attentive,' our souls lifted in reverential expectation. Every *fact* is a word of God, and I call it irreligious to say, 'I will deny this because it displeases me.' 'I will look away from that because it will do me harm.' Why be afraid of the *truth?* God is in the truth, and He is called also Love. The evil results of certain experiences of this class result mainly from the superstitious and distorted views held by most people concerning the spiritual world. We have to learn — we in the body — that Death does not teach all things. Death is simply an accident. Foolish Jack Smith who died on Monday, is on Tuesday still foolish Jack Smith. If people who on Monday scorned his opinions prudently, will on Tuesday receive his least words as oracles, they very naturally may go mad, or at least do something as foolish as their inspirer is. Also, it is no argument against any subject, that it drives people mad who suffer themselves to be

absorbed in it. That would be an argument against all religion, and all love, by your leave. Ask the Commissioners of Lunacy; knock at the door of mad-houses in general, and inquire what two causes act almost universally in filling them. Answer — love and religion. The common objection of the degradation of knocking with the leg of the table, and the ridicule of the position for a spirit, &c., &c., I don't enter into at all. Twice I have been present at table-experiments, and each time I was deeply impressed — impressed, there's the word for it! The panting and shivering of that dead dumb wood, the human emotion conveyed through it — by what? had to me a greater significance than the St. Peter's of this Rome. O poet! do you not know that poetry is not confined to the clipped alleys, no, nor to the blue tops of 'Parnassus hill?' Poetry is where we live and have our being — wherever God works and man understands. Hein! . . . if you are in a dungeon and a friend knocks through the outer wall, spelling out by knocks the words you comprehend; you don't think the worse of the friend standing in the sun who remembers you. He is not degraded by it, you rather think. Now apply this. Certainly, there is a reaction from the materialism of the age, and this is certainly well, in my mind, but then there is something more than this, more than a mere human reaction, I believe. I have not the power of writing myself at all, though I have felt the pencil turn in my hand — a peculiar spiral motion like the turning of the tables, and independent of volition, but the power is not with me strong enough to make words or letters even.

We see a good deal of Fanny Kemble, a noble creature, and hear her sister sing — Mrs. Sartoris. Do admit a little society. It is good for soul and body, and on the Continent it is easy to get a handful of society without paying too dear for it. That, I think, is an advantage of continental life.

To Miss Mitford

43 Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: March 19, 1854.

My dearest Miss Mitford, — Your letter made my heart ache. It is sad, sad indeed, that you should have had this renewed cold just as you appeared to be rallying a little from previous shocks, and I know how depressing and enfeebling a malady the influenza is. It's the vulture finishing the work of the wolf. I pray God that, having battled through this last attack, you may be gradually strengthened and relieved by the incoming of the spring (though an English spring makes one shiver to think of generally), and with the summer come out into the garden, to sit in a chair and be shone upon, dear, dear friend. I shall be in England then, and get down to see you this time, and I tenderly hold to the dear hope of seeing you smile again, and hearing you talk in the old way. . . .

We see a good deal of the Kembles here, and like them both, especially the Fanny, who is looking magnificent still, with her black hair and radiant smile. A very noble creature, indeed. Somewhat unelastic, unpliant to the eye, attached to the old modes of thought and convention, but noble in quality and defects; I like her much. She thinks me credulous and full of dreams, but does not despise me for that reason, which is good and tolerant of her, and pleasant, too, for I should not be quite easy under her contempt. Mrs. Sartoris is genial and generous, her milk has had time to stand to cream, in her happy family relations. The Sartoris's house has the best society at Rome, and exquisite music, of course. We met Lockhart there, and my husband sees a good deal of him — more than I do, because of the access of cold weather lately which has kept me at home chiefly. Robert went down to the seaside in a day's excursion with him and the Sartoris's; and, I hear, found favor in his sight. Said the critic: 'I like Browning, he isn't at all like

a damned literary man.' That's a compliment, I believe, according to your dictionary. It made me laugh and think of you directly. I am afraid Lockhart's health is in a bad state; he looks very ill, and every now and then his strength seems to fail. Robert has been sitting for his picture to Fisher, the English artist, who painted Mr. Kenyon and Landor; you remember those pictures in Mr. Kenyon's house? Landor's was praised much by Southey. Well, he has painted Robert, and it is an admirable likeness.[1] The expression is an exceptional expression, but highly characteristic; it is one of Fisher's best works. Now he is about our Wiedeman, and if he succeeds as well in painting angels as men, will do something beautiful with that seraphic face. You are to understand that these works are done by the artist *for* the artist. Oh, we couldn't afford to have such a luxury as a portrait done for us. But I am pleased to have a good likeness of each of my treasures *extant* in the possession of somebody. Robert's will, of course, be eminently saleable, and Wiedeman's too, perhaps, for the beauty's sake, with those blue far-reaching eyes, and that innocent angel face emplumed in the golden ringlets! Somebody told me yesterday that she never had known, in a long experience of children, so attractive a child. He is so full of sweetness and vivacity together, of imagination and grace. A poetical child really, and in the best sense. Such a piece of innocence and simplicity with it all, too! A child you couldn't lie to if you tried. I had a fit of remorse for telling him the history of Jack and the Beanstalk, when he turned his earnest eyes up to me at the end and said, 'I think, if Jack went up so high, he must have seen God.'

To see those two works through the press must be a fatigue to you in your present weak state, dearest friend, and I keep wishing vainly I could be of use to you in the matter of the proof sheets. I might, you know, if I were in

[1] This portrait is now in possession of Mr. R. B. Browning at Venice.

England. I do some work myself, but doubt much whether I shall be ready for the printers by July; no, indeed, it is clear I shall not. If Robert is, it will be well. Doesn't it surprise you that Alexander Smith should be already in a third edition? I can't make it out for my part. I 'give it up' as is my way with riddles. He is both too bad and too good to explain this phenomenon, which is harder to me than any implied in the turning tables or involuntary writing. By the way, a lady whom I know here *writes Greek* without knowing or having ever known a single letter of it. The unbelievers writhe under it.

Oh, I have been reading poor Haydon's biography. There is tragedy! The pain of it one can hardly shake off. Surely, surely, wrong was done somewhere, when the worst is admitted of Haydon. For himself, looking forward beyond the grave, I seem to understand that all things when most bitter worked ultimate good to him, for that sublime arrogance of his would have been fatal perhaps to the moral nature if developed further by success. But for the nation we had our duties, and we should not suffer our teachers and originators to sink thus. It is a book written in blood of the heart. Poor Haydon!

May God bless you, my dear friend! I think of you and love you dearly, Robert's love, put to mine, and Penini's love put to Robert's. I give away Penini's love as I please just now.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

Send my bulletins; only *two lines* if you will.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: about March, 1854.]

My dearest Sarianna, — We are all well, and so is the weather, which is diviner. We sit with the windows wide open, and find it almost too warm, and to-day Robert and

I have been wandering under the trees of the Pincio and looking to the Monte Marino pine. Let the best come, I don't like Rome, I never shall; and as they have put into the English newspapers that I don't, I might as well acknowledge the barbarism. Very glad I shall be to see you and Paris, even though my beloved Florence shall be left behind. Dearest Sarianna, after a short rest at Paris, we go on to London for the printing of Robert's book (mine won't be ready till later in the year), and for the sight of some dear English faces while the weather shall admit of it, before we settle for the winter in France. Well, you will go with us to England, won't you? The dear nonno[1] will spare you to go with us? It will do you good, and it will do us good, certainly.

I quite agree with you that there's no situation like the Champs Elysées — really, there is scarcely anything like it in Europe, if you put away Venice — for a situation in a city.

The worst of the Champs Elysées is that it is out of the way, and expensive on the point of carriages when you can't walk far. People tell you, too, that the air is sharper at the end of the avenue; yet the sun is so brilliant as to make amends for the disadvantage, if it exists. Then you pay more for houses on account of the concourse of English. And what if I object a little to the English besides? If I do, the desirableness of the pure air and free walking for Penini counterbalances them.

The Thackeray girls have had the scarlatina at Naples, and have been very desolate, I fear, without a female servant or friend near them. They probably were indisposed towards Naples by their own illness (which was slight, however; the scarlet fever is always slight in Italy they say), and by their father's more serious attack, for I have heard very different accounts of the Neapolitan weather. Still, it has been an abnormal winter everywhere, and there are cold

[1] *I.e.* 'grandfather,' a name by which Mr. Browning, senior, is frequently referred to in these letters.

winds on that coast on certain months of the year always. Lockhart has gone away with the Duke of Wellington, who was in deep consideration how he should manage his funeral on the road. Robert was present when the question was mooted on the Duke's last evening. *Should* he send the body to England or bury it? Would it be delicate to ask Lockhart which he preferred? Somebody said: 'Suppose you were to ask what he would do with your body if you died yourself.' I am afraid poor Lockhart is really in a dangerous state of health, and that it would have been better if he had had something tenderer and more considerate than a dukedom travelling with him under his circumstances. He called upon us, and took a great fancy to Robert, I understand, as being 'not at all like a damned literary man.'

Penini is overwhelmed with attentions and gifts of all kinds, and generally acknowledged as the king of the children here. Mrs. Page, the wife of the distinguished American artist, gave a party in honor of him the other day. There was an immense cake inscribed '*Penini*' in sugar; and he sat at the head of the table and did the honors. You never saw a child so changed in point of shyness. He will go anywhere with anybody, and talk, and want none of us to back him. Wilson is only instructed not to come till it is 'velly late' to fetch him away. He talks to Fanny Kemble, who 'dashes' most people. 'I not aflaid of nossing,' says he, in his eloquent English. Mr. Fisher's cartoon of him is very pretty, but doesn't do him justice in the delicacy of the lower part of the face. Yet I can't complain of Mr. Fisher after the admirable likeness he has painted of Robert. It is really *satisfying* to me. You will see it in London. Oh, how cruel it is that we can't buy it, Sarianna; I have a sort of hope that Mr. Kenyon may — but zitto, zitto![1] Arabel will be very grateful to you for the drawings. . . .

[*Endorsed by Miss Browning, 'Part of a letter.'*]

[1] 'Hush, hush!'

The plans, thus confidently spoken of, for a visit to Paris and London in the summer of this year, did not attain fulfilment. The Brownings left Rome for Florence about the end of May, intending to stay there only a few weeks; but their arrangements were altered by letters received from England, and ultimately they remained in Florence until the summer of the following year. Whether for this reason, or because the poems were not, after all, ready for press, the printing of Mr. Browning's new volumes ('Men and Women') was also postponed, and they did not appear until 1855; while 'Aurora Leigh' was still a long way from completion.

To Miss Mitford

Rome: May 10, 1854.

My ever dearest Miss Mitford,—Your letter pained me to a degree which I will not pain you by expressing farther. Now, I do not write to press for another letter. On the contrary, I *entreat* you not to attempt to write a word to me with your own hand, until you can do so without effort and suffering. In the meanwhile, would it be impossible for K. to send me in one line some account of you? I don't mean to tease, but I should be very glad and thankful to have news of you though in the briefest manner, and if a letter were addressed to me at Poste Restante, Florence, it would reach me, as we rest there on our road to Paris and London. In any case I shall see you this summer, if it shall please God; and stay with you the half hour you allow, and kiss your dear hands and feel again, I hope, the brightness of your smile. As the green summer comes on you must be the better surely; if you can bear to lie out under the trees, the general health will rally and the local injury correct itself. You must have a strong, energetic vitality; and, after all, spinal disorders do not usually attack life, though they disable and overthrow. The pain you endure is the terrible thing. Has a local application

of chloroform been ever tried? I catch at straws, perhaps, with my unlearned hands, but it's the instinct of affection. While you suffer, my dear friend, the world is applauding you. I catch sight of stray advertisements and fragmentary notices of 'Atherton,' which seems to have been received everywhere with deserved claps of hands. This will not be comfort to you, perhaps; but you will feel the satisfaction which every workman feels in successful work. I think the edition of plays and poems has not yet appeared, and I suppose there will be nothing in *that* which can be new to us. 'Atherton' I thirst for, but the cup will be dry, I dare say, till I get to England, for new books even at Florence take waiting for far beyond all necessary bounds. We shall not stay long in Tuscany. We want to be in England late in June or very early in July, and some days belong to Paris as we pass, since Robert's family are resident there. To leave Rome will fill me with barbarian complacency. I don't pretend to have a rag of sentiment about Rome. It's a palimpsest Rome — a watering-place written over the antique — and I haven't taken to it as a poet should, I suppose; only let us speak the truth, above all things. I am strongly a creature of association, and the associations of the place have not been personally favorable to me. Among the rest my child, the light of my eyes, has been more unwell lately than I ever saw him in his life, and we were forced three times to call in a physician. The malady was not serious, it was just the result of the climate, relaxation of the stomach, &c., but the end is that he is looking a delicate, pale, little creature, he who was radiant with all the roses and stars of infancy but two months ago. The pleasantest days in Rome we have spent with the Kembles — the two sisters — who are charming and excellent, both of them, in different ways; and certainly they have given us some exquisite hours on the Campagna, upon picnic excursions, they and certain of their friends — for instance, M. Ampère, the member of the French Institute, who is witty and agreeable; M. Gorze, the Austrian Minister, also an

agreeable man; and Mr. Lyons, the son of Sir Edmund, &c. The talk was almost too brilliant for the sentiment of the scenery, but it harmonised entirely with the mayonnaise and champagne. I should mention, too, Miss Hosmer (but she is better than a talker), the young American sculptress, who is a great pet of mine and of Robert's, and who emancipates the eccentric life of a perfectly 'emancipated female' from all shadow of blame by the purity of hers. She lives here all alone (at twenty-two); dines and breakfasts at the *cafés* precisely as a young man would; works from six o'clock in the morning till night, as a great artist must, and this with an absence of pretension and simplicity of manners which accord rather with the childish dimples in her rosy cheeks than with her broad forehead and high aims. The Archer Clives have been to Naples, but have returned for a time. Mr. Lockhart, who went to England with the Duke of Wellington (the same prepared to bury him on the road), writes to Mrs. Sartoris that he has grown much better under the influence of the native beef and beer. To do him justice he looked, when here, innocent of the recollection even of either. I wonder if you have seen Mrs. Howe's poems, lately out, called 'Passion Flowers.' They were sent to me by an American friend but were intercepted *en route*, so that I have not set eyes on them yet, but one or two persons, not particularly reliable as critics, have praised them to me. She is the wife of Dr. Howe, the deaf and dumb philanthropist, and herself neither deaf nor dumb (very much the contrary) I understand — a handsome woman and brilliant in society. I gossip on to you, dearest dear Miss Mitford, as if you were in gossiping humour. Believe that my tender thoughts, deeper than any said, are with you always.

Robert's love with that of your attached

BA.

We go on the 22nd of this month. You have seen Mr. Chorley's book, I daresay, which I should like much to see.

To Miss Browning

Casa Guidi: Thursday, [end of May 1854].

My dearest Sarianna, — I am delighted to say that we have arrived, and see our dear Florence, the queen of Italy, after all. On the road I said to Penini, 'Make a poem about Florence.' Without a moment's hesitation he began, 'Florence is more pretty of all. Florence is a beauty. Florence was born first, and then Rome was born. And Paris was born after.' Penini is always *en verve*. He's always ready to make a poem on any subject, and doesn't ask you to wait while he clears his voice. The darling will soon get over the effect of that poisonous Roman air, I do trust, though it is humiliating to hear our Florentines wailing over the loss of bloom and dimples; it doesn't console me that his amount of growth is properly acknowledged. Well, good milk and good air will do their work in a little time with God's blessing, and a most voracious appetite is developed already, I am glad to say. Even in the journey he revived, the blue marks under the darling eyes fading gradually away, and now he looks decidedly better, though unlike himself of two months ago. You are to understand that the child is perfectly well, and that the delicate look is traceable distinctly and only to the attacks he had in Rome during the last few weeks. Throughout the winter he was radiant, as I used to tell you, and the confessed king of the whole host of his contemporaries and country-babies. . . .

The Kembles were our gain in Rome. I appreciate and admire both of them. They fail in nothing as you see them nearer. Noble and upright women, whose social brilliancy is their least distinction! Mrs. Sartoris is the more tender and tolerant, the more loveable and sympathetical, perhaps, to me. I should like you to know them both. Then there is that dear Mr. Page. Yes, and

Harriet Hosmer, the young American sculptress, who is an immense favorite with us both.

A comfort is that Robert is considered here to be looking better than he ever was known to look. And this notwithstanding the greyness of his beard, which indeed is, in my own mind, very becoming to him, the argentine touch giving a character of elevation and thought to the whole physiognomy. This greyness was suddenly developed; let me tell you how. He was in a state of bilious irritability on the morning of his arrival in Rome from exposure to the sun or some such cause, and in a fit of suicidal impatience shaved away his whole beard, whiskers and all! I *cried* when I saw him, I was so horror-struck. I might have gone into hysterics and still been reasonable; for no human being was ever so disfigured by so simple an act. Of course I said, when I recovered breath and voice, that everything was at an end between him and me if he didn't let it all grow again directly, and (upon the further advice of his looking-glass) he yielded the point, and the beard grew. But it grew *white*, which was the just punishment of the gods — our sins leave their traces.

Well, poor darling, Robert won't shock you after all, you can't choose but be satisfied with his looks. M. de Monclar swore to me that he was not changed for the intermediate years.

Robert talks of money, of waiting for *that*, among other hindrances to setting out directly. Not *my* fault, be certain, Sarianna! We seem to have a prospect of letting our house for a year, which, if the thing happens, will give us a lift.

We spent yesterday evening with Lytton at his villa, meeting there Mr. and Mrs. Walpole, Frederick Tennyson, and young Norton (Mrs. Norton's son), who married the Capri girl. She was not present, I am sorry to say. We walked home to the song of nightingales by starlight and firefly-light. Florence looks to us more beautiful than

ever after Rome. I love the very stones of it, to say nothing of the cypresses and river.

Robert says, 'Are you nearly done?' I am done. Give Penini's love and mine to the dear nonno, and tell him (and yourself, dear) how delighted we shall be [to] have you both. You are prepared to go to England, I hope. By the way, the weather there is said to be murderous through bitter winds, but it must soften as the season advances. May God bless you. I am yours in truest love.

BA.

We had a very pleasant vettura journey, Robert will have told you.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: June 6, 1854.

Yes, dearest friend, I had your few lines which Arabel sent to me. I had them on the very day I had posted my letter to you, and I need not say how deeply it moved me that you should have thought of giving me that pleasure of Mr. Ruskin's kind word at the expense of what I knew to be so much pain to yourself. . . .

We mean to stay at Florence a week or two longer and then go northward. I love Florence, the place looks exquisitely beautiful in its garden-ground of vineyards and olive trees, sung round by the nightingales day and night, nay, sung *into* by the nightingales, for as you walk along the streets in the evening, the song trickles down into them till you stop to listen. Such nights we have between starlight and firefly-light, and the nightingales singing! I would willingly stay here, if it were not that we are constrained by duty and love to go, and at some day not distant, I daresay we shall come back 'for good and all' as people say, seeing that if you take one thing with another, there is no place in the world like Florence, I am

persuaded, for a place to live in. Cheap, tranquil, cheerful, beautiful, within the limit of civilisation yet out of the crush of it. I have not seen the Trollopes yet; but we have spent two delicious evenings at villas on the outside the gates, one with young Lytton, Sir Edward's son, of whom I have told you, I think. I like him, we both do, from the bottom of our hearts. Then our friend Frederick Tennyson, the new poet, we are delighted to see again. Have you caught sight of his poems? If you have tell me your thought. Mrs. Howe's I have read since I wrote last. Some of them are good — many of the thoughts striking, and all of a certain elevation. Of poetry, however, strictly speaking, there is not much; and there's a large proportion of conventional stuff in the volume. She must be a clever woman. Of the ordinary impotencies and prettinesses of female poets she does not partake, but she can't take rank with poets in the good meaning of the word, I think, so as to stand without leaning. Also there is some bad taste and affectation in the dressing of her personality. I daresay Mr. Fields will bring you her book. Talking of American literature, with the publishers on the back of it, we think of offering the proofs of our new works to any publisher over the water who will pay us properly for the advantage of bringing out a volume in America simultaneously with the publication in England. We have heard that such a proposal will be acceptable, and mean to try it. The words you sent to me from Mr. Ruskin gave me great pleasure indeed, as how should they not from such a man? I like him personally, too, besides my admiration for him as a writer, and I was deeply gratified in every way to have his approbation. His 'Seven Lamps' I have not read yet. Books come out slowly to Italy. It's our disadvantage, as you know. Ruskin and art go together. I must tell you how Rome made me some amends after all. Page, the American artist, painted a picture of Robert like an Italian, and then presented it to me like a prince. It is a wonderful

picture, the colouring so absolutely *Venetian* that artists can't (for the most part) keep their temper when they look at it, and the breath of the likeness is literal.[1] Mr. Page has *secrets* in the art — certainly nobody else paints like him — and his nature, I must say, is equal to his genius and worthy of it. Dearest Miss Mitford, the 'Athenæum' is always as frigid as Mont Blanc; it can't be expected to grow warmer for looking over your green valleys and still waters. It wouldn't be Alpine if it did. They think it a point of duty in that journal to shake hands with one finger. I daresay when Mr. Chorley sits down to write an article he puts his feet in cold water as a preliminary. Still, I oughtn't to be impertinent. He has been very good-natured to *me*, and it isn't his fault if I'm not Poet Laureate at this writing, and engaged in cursing the Czar in Pindarics very prettily. 'Atherton,' meanwhile, wants nobody to praise it, I am sure. How glad I shall be to seize and read it, and how I thank you for the gift. May God bless and keep you. I may hear again if you write soon to Florence, but don't pain yourself for the world, I entreat you. I shall see you before long, I think.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

Robert's love.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 20, [1854].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I this moment receive your little note. It makes me very sad and apprehensive about you, and I would give all this bright sunshine for weeks for one explanatory word which might make me more easy. Arabel speaks of receiving your books — I suppose 'Atherton' — and of having heard from yourself a very bad account of

[1] For the subsequent fate of this picture, see note on page 148, above.

your state of health. Are you worse, my beloved friend? I have been waiting to hear the solution of our own plans (dependent upon letters from England) in order to write to you; and when I found our journey to London was definitively rendered impossible till next spring, I deferred writing yet again, it was so painful to me to say to you that our meeting could not take place this year. Now, I receive your little note and write at once to say how sad *that* makes me. It is the first time that the expression of your love, my beloved friend, has made me sad, and I start as from an omen. On the other hand, the character you write in is so firm and like yourself, that I do hope and trust you are not sensibly worse. Let me hear by a word, if possible, that the change of weather has done you some little good. I understand there has scarcely been any summer in England, and this must necessarily have been adverse to you. A gleam of fine weather would revive you by God's help. Oh, that I could look in your face and say, 'God bless you!' as I feel it. May God bless you, my dear, dear friend.

Our reason for not going to England has not been from caprice, but a cross in money matters. A ship was to have brought us in something, and brought us in nothing instead, with a discount; the consequence of which is that we are transfixed at Florence, and unable even to 'fly to the mountains' as a refuge from the summer heat. It has been a great disappointment to us all, and to our respective families, my poor darling Arabel especially; but we can only be patient, and I take comfort in the obvious fact that my Penini is quite well and almost as rosy as ever in spite of the excessive Florence heat. One of the worst thoughts I have is about *you*. I had longed so to see you this summer, and had calculated with such certainty upon doing so. I would have gone to England for that single reason if I could, but I can't; we can't stir, really. That we should be able to sit quietly still at Florence and eat our bread and maccaroni is the utmost of our possibilities this summer.

Mrs. Trollope has gone to the Baths of Lucca, and thus I have not seen her. She will be very interested about you, of course. How many hang their hearts upon your sick-bed, dearest Miss Mitford! Yes, and their prayers too.

The other day, by an accident, an old number of the 'Athenæum' fell into my hands, and I read for the second time Mr. Chorley's criticism upon 'Atherton.' It is evidently written in a hurried manner, and is quite inadequate as a notice of the book; but, do you know, I am of opinion that if you considered it more closely you would lose your impression of its being depreciatory and cold. He says that the *only fault* of the work is its *shortness;* a rare piece of praise to be given to a work nowadays. You see, your reputation is at the height; neither he nor another could *help* you; such books as yours make their own way. The 'Athenæum' doesn't give full critiques of Dickens, for instance, and it is arctical in general temperature. I thought I would say this to you. Certainly I *do know* that Mr. Chorley highly regards you in every capacity — as writer and as woman — and in the manner in which he named you to me in his last letter there was no chill of sentiment nor recoil of opinion. So do not admit a doubt of *him;* he is a sure and affectionate friend, and absolutely high-minded and reliable; of an intact and even chivalrous delicacy. I say it, lest you might have need of him and be scrupulous (from your late feeling) about making him useful. It is horrible to doubt of one's friends; oh, I know *that,* and would save you from it.

We had a letter from Paris two days ago from one of the noblest and most intellectual men in the country, M. Milsand, a writer in the 'Deux Mondes.' He complains of a stagnation in the imaginative literature, but adds that he is consoled for everything by the 'state of politics.' Your Napoleon is doing you credit, his very enemies must confess.

As for me, I can't write to-day. Your little precious, melancholy note hangs round the neck of my heart like a

stone. Arabel simply says she is afraid from what you have written to her that you must be very ill; she does not tell me what you wrote to her — perhaps for fear of paining me — and now I am pained by the silence beyond measure.

Robert's love and warmest wishes for you. He appreciates your kind word to him. And I, what am I to say? I love you from a very sad and grateful heart, looking backwards and forwards — and *upwards* to pray God's love down on you!

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B., rather Ba.

Precious the books will be to me. I hope not to wait to read them till they reach me, as there is a bookseller here who will be sure to have them. Thank you, thank you.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: September 4, 1854.

Five minutes do not pass, my beloved friend, since reading this dear letter which has wrung from me tender and sorrowful tears, and answering it thus. Pray for you? I do not wait that you should bid me. May the divine love in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ shine upon you day and night, and make all our human loves strike you as cold and dull in comparison with that ineffable tenderness. As to wandering prayers, I cannot believe that it is of consequence whether this poor breath of ours wanders or does not wander. If we have strength to throw ourselves upon Him for everything, for prayer, as well as for the ends of prayer, it is enough, and He will prove it to be enough presently. I have been when I could not pray at all. And then God's face seemed so close upon me that there was no need of prayer, any more than if I were near *you*, as I yearn to be, as I ought to be, there would be need for this letter. Oh, be sure that He means well by us by what

we suffer, and it is when we suffer that He often makes the meaning clearer. You know how that brilliant, witty, true poet Heine, who was an atheist (as much as a man can pretend to be), has made a public profession of a change of opinion which was pathetic to my eyes and heart the other day as I read it. He has joined no church, but simply (to use his own words) has 'returned home to God like the prodigal son after a long tending of the swine.' It is delightful to go home to God, even after a tending of the sheep. Poor Heine has lived a sort of living death for years, quite deprived of his limbs, and suffering tortures to boot, I understand. It is not because we are brought low that we must die, my dearest friend. I hope — I do not say 'hope' for *you* so much as for *me* and for the many who hang their hearts on your life — I hope that you may survive all these terrible sufferings and weaknesses, and I take my comfort from your letter, from the firmness and beauty of the manuscript; I who know how weak hands will shudder and reel along the paper. Surely there is strength for more life in that hand. Now I stoop to kiss it in my thought. Feel my kiss on the dear hand, dear, dear friend.

A previous letter of yours pained me much because I seemed to have given you the painful trouble in it of describing your state, your weakness. Ah, I *knew* what that state was, and it was *therefore* that the slip of paper which came with 'Atherton' seemed to me so ominous! By the way, I shall see 'Atherton' before long, I dare say. The 'German Library' in our street is to have a 'box of new books' almost directly, and in it surely must be 'Atherton,' and you shall hear my thoughts of the book as soon as I catch sight of it. Then you have sent me the Dramas. Thank you, thank you; they will be precious. I saw the article in the 'Athenæum' with joy and triumph, and knew Mr. Chorley by the 'Roman hand.' In the 'Illustrated News' also, Robert (not I) read an enthusiastic notice. He fell upon it at the reading-room where I never

go on account of my *she*-dom, women in Florence being supposed not ——

[*Part of this letter is missing.*]

Think of me who am far, yet near in love and thought. Love me with that strong heart of yours. May God bless it, bless it.

I am ever your attached
E. B. B., rather Ba.

I have had a sad letter from poor Haydon's daughter. She has fifty-six pounds a year, and can scarcely live on it in England, and inquires if she could live in any family in Florence. I fear to recommend her to come so far on such means. Robert's love. *May God bless you and keep you. Love me.*

To Miss Mitford

Florence: October 19, 1854.

I will try not to be overjoyed, my dear, dearest Miss Mitford, but, indeed, it is difficult to refrain from catching at hope with both hands. If the general health will but rally, there is nothing fatal about a spine disease. May God bless you, give you the best blessing in earth and heaven, as the God of the living in both places. We ought not to be selfish, nor stupid, so as to be afraid of leaving you in His hands. What is beautiful and joyful to observe is the patience and self-possession with which you endure even the most painful manifestation of His will; and that, while you lose none of that interest in the things of our mortal life which is characteristic of your sympathetic nature, you are content, just as if you felt none, to let the world go, according to the decision of God. May you be more and more confirmed and elevated and at rest — being the Lord's, whether absent from the body or present in it. For my own part, I have been long convinced that what we call death is a mere incident in life — perhaps scarcely a greater

one than the occurrence of puberty, or the revolution which comes with any new emotion or influx of new knowledge. I am heterodox about sepulchres, and believe that no *part of us* will ever lie in a grave. I don't think much of my nail-parings — do you? — not even of the nail of my thumb when I cut off what Penini calls the 'gift-mark' on it. I believe that the body of flesh is a mere husk which drops off at death, while the spiritual body (see St. Paul) emerges in glorious resurrection at once. Swedenborg says, some persons do not immediately realise that they have passed death, and this seems to me highly probable. It is curious that Maurice, Mr. Kingsley's friend, about whom so much lately has been written and quarrelled (and who *has* made certain great mistakes, I think), takes this precise view of the resurrection, with an apparent unconsciousness of what Swedenborg has stated upon the subject, and that, I, too, long before I knew Swedenborg, or heard the name of Maurice, came to the same conclusions. I wonder if Mr. Kingsley agrees with us. I dare say he does, upon the whole — for the ordinary doctrine seems to me as little taught by Scripture as it can be reconciled with philosophical probabilities. I believe in an active, *human* life, beyond death as before it, an uninterrupted human life. I believe in no waiting in the grave, and in no vague effluence of spirit in a formless vapour. But you'll be tired with 'what I believe.'

I have been to the other side of Florence to call on Mrs. Trollope, on purpose that I might talk to her of you, but she was not at home, though she has returned from the Baths of Lucca. From what I hear, she appears to be well, and has recommenced her 'public mornings,' which we shrink away from. She 'receives' every Saturday morning in the most heterogeneous way possible. It must be amusing to anybody not overwhelmed by it, and people say that she snatches up 'characters' for her 'so many volumes a year' out of the diversities of masks presented to

her on these occasions. Oh, our Florence! In vain do I cry out for 'Atherton.' The most active circulating library 'hasn't got it yet,' they say. I must still wait. Meanwhile, of course, I am delighted with all your successes, and your books won't spoil by keeping like certain other books. So I may wait.

How young children unfold like flowers, and how pleasant it is to watch them! I congratulate you upon yours — your baby-girl must be a dear forward little thing. But I wish I could show you my Penini, with his drooping golden ringlets and seraphic smile, and his talk about angels — you would like him, I know. Your girl-baby has avenged my name for me, and now, if you heard my Penini say in the midst of a coaxing fit — 'O, my sweetest little mama, my darling, *dearest*, little Ba,' you would admit that 'Ba' must have a music in it, to my ears at least. The love of two generations is poured out to me in that name — and the stream seems to run (in one instance) when alas! the fountain is dry. I do not refer to the dead who live still.

Ah, dearest friend, you feel how I must have felt about the accident in Wimpole Street.[1] I can scarcely talk to you about it. There will be permanent lameness, Arabel says, according to the medical opinion, though the general health was not for a moment affected. But permanent lameness! That is sad, for a person of active habits. I ventured to write a little note — which was not returned, I thank God — or read, I dare say; but of course there was no result. I never even expected it, as matters have been. I must tell you that our pecuniary affairs are promising better results for next year, and that we shall not, in all probability, be tied up from going to England. For the rest — if I understand you — oh no! My husband has a family likeness to Lucifer in being proud. Besides, it's not necessary. When literary people are treated in England as

[1] To Mr. Barrett.

in some other countries, in that case and that time we may come in for our share in the pensions given by the people, without holding out our hands. Now think of Carlyle — unpensioned! Why, if we sate here in rags, we wouldn't press in for an obolus before Belisarius. Mrs. Sartoris has been here on her way to Rome, spending most of her time with us — singing passionately and talking eloquently. She is really charming. May God bless and keep you and love you, beloved friend. Love your own affectionate

BA.

May it be Robert's love?

To Miss Browning

[Florence:] November 11, 1854 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — I shall be writing my good deeds in water to-day with this mere pretence at inks.[1] We are all well, though it is much too cold for me — a horrible tramontana which would create a cough under the ribs of death, and sets me coughing a little in the morning. I am afraid it's to be a hard winter again this year — or harder than last year's. We began fires on the last day of October, after the most splendid stretch of spring, summer, and autumn I ever remember. We have translated our room into winter — sent off the piano towards the windows, and packed tables, chairs, and sofas as near to the hearth as possible.

What a time of anxiety this war time is.[2] I do thank God that *we* have no reasons for its being a personal agony, through having anyone very precious at the post of danger. I have two first cousins there, a Hedley, and Paget Butler, Sir Thomas's son. I understand that the gloom in England from the actual bereavements is great; that the frequency of deep mourning strikes the eye; that even the

[1] This letter is written in very faint ink.

[2] The news of Inkerman had come only a few days before.

shops are filled chiefly with black; and that it has become a sort of *mode* to wear black or grey, without family losses, and from the mere force of sympathy.

My poor father is still unable to stir from the house, and he has been unwell through a bilious attack, the consequence of want of exercise. Nothing can induce him to go out in a carriage, because he 'never did in his life drive out for mere amusement,' he says. There's what Mr. Kenyon calls 'the Barrett obstinacy,' and it makes me uneasy as to the effect of it in this instance upon the general health of the patient. Poor darling Arabel seems to me much out of spirits — 'out of humour,' *she* calls it, dear thing — oppressed by the gloom of the house, and looking back yearningly to the time when she had sisters to talk to. Oh Sarianna, I wish we were all together to have a good gossip or groaning, with a laugh at the end! . . .

Your ever affectionate sister,

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: November 1854.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — you make me wait and I make you wait for letters. It is bad of us both — and remember, *worse of you*, seeing that you left two long letters of mine unanswered for months. I felt as if I had fallen down an *oubliette*, and I was about to utter the loud shrieks befitting the occasion, when you wrote at last. Don't treat me so another time; I want to know your plans for the winter, since the winter is upon us. Next summer, if it pleases God, we shall certainly meet somewhere — say Paris, say London. We shall have money for it, which we had not this year; and now the disappointment's over, I don't care. The heat at Florence was very bearable, and our child grew into his roses lost at Rome, and we have lived a very tranquil and happy six months on our own sofas and chairs, among our own nightingales and fireflies. There's

an inclination in me to turn round with my Penini and say, 'I'm an Italian.' Certainly both light and love seem stronger with me at Florence than elsewhere. . . .

The war! The alliance is the consolation; the necessity is the justification. For the rest, one shuts one's eyes and ears — the rest is too horrible. What do you mean by fearing that the war itself may not be all the evil of the war? I expect, on the contrary, a freer political atmosphere after this thunder. Louis Napoleon is behaving very tolerably well, won't you admit, after all? And I don't look to a treason at the end as certain of his enemies do, who are reduced to a 'wait, wait, and you'll see.' There's a friend of mine here, a traditional anti-Gallican, and very lively in his politics until the last few months. He can't speak now or lift up his eyelids, and I am too magnanimous in opposition to talk of anything else in his presence except Verdi's last opera, which magnanimity he appreciates, though he has no ear. About a month ago he came suddenly to life again. 'Have you heard the news? L. Napoleon is suspected of making a secret treaty with Russia.' The next morning he was as dead as ever — poor man! It's a desperate case for him.

Are you not happy — *you* — in this fast union between England and France? Some of our English friends, coming to Italy through France, say that the general feeling towards England, and the affectionate greetings and sympathies lavished upon them as Englishmen by the French everywhere, are quite strange and touching. 'In two or three years,' said a Frenchman on a railroad, 'French and English, we shall make only one nation. Are you very curious about the subject of gossip just now between Lord Palmerston and Louis Napoleon? We hear from somebody in Paris, whose *métier* it is to know everything, that it refers to the readjustment of affairs in Italy. May God grant it. The Italians have been hanging their whole hope's weight upon Louis Napoleon ever since he came to power, and if he

does now what he can for them I shall be proud of my *protégé* — oh, and so glad! Robert and I clapped our hands yesterday when we heard this; we couldn't refrain, though our informant was reactionary and in a deep state of conservative melancholy. 'Awful things were to be expected about Italy,' quotha!

Now do be good, and write and tell me what your plans are for the winter. We shall remain here till May, and then, if God pleases, go north — to Paris and London. Robert and I are at work on our books. I have taken to ass's milk to counteract the tramontana, and he is in the twenty-first and I in the twenty-second volume of Alexandre Dumas's 'Memoirs.' The book is *un peu hasardé* occasionally, as might be expected, but extremely interesting, and I really must recommend it to your attention for the winter if you don't know it already.

We have seen a good deal of Mrs. Sartoris lately on her way to Rome (Adelaide Kemble) — eloquent in talk and song, a most brilliant woman, and noble. She must be saddened since then, poor thing, by her father's death. Tell me if it is true that Harriet Martineau has seceded again from her atheism? We heard so the other day. Dearest Mrs. Martin, do write to me; and do, both of you, remember me, and think of both of us kindly. With Robert's true regards,

I am your as ever affectionate

BA.

Tell me dear Mr. Martin's mind upon politics — in the Austrian and Prussian question, for instance. We have no fears, in spite of Dr. Cumming and the prophets generally, of ultimate results.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 11, 1854.

I should have written long ago, my dearest Miss Mitford, to try to say half the pleasure and gratitude your letter made

for me, but I have been worried and anxious about the illnesses, not exactly in my family but nearly as touching to me, and hanging upon posts from England in a painful way inevitable to these great distances. . . .

I understand that literature is going on flaggingly in England just now, on account of nobody caring to read anything but telegraphic messages. So Thackeray told somebody, only he might refer chiefly to the fortunes of the 'Newcomes,' who are not strong enough to resist the Czar. The book is said to be defective in story. Certainly the subject of the war is very absorbing; we are all here in a state of tremblement about it. Dr. Harding has a son at Sebastopol, who has had already three horses killed under him. What hideous carnage! The allies are plainly numerically too weak, and the two governments are much blamed for not reinforcing long ago. I am discontented about Austria. I don't like handshaking with Austria; I would rather be picking her pocket of her Italian provinces; and, while upon such civil terms, how *can* we? Yet somebody, who professes to know everything, told somebody at Paris, who professes to tell everything, that Louis Napoleon and Lord Palmerston talked much the other day about what is to be done for Italy; and here in Italy we have long been all opening our mouths like so many young thrushes in a nest, expecting some 'worme small' from your Emperor. Now, if there's an Austrian alliance instead! . . .

Do you hear from Mr. Kingsley? and, if so, how is his wife? I am reading now Mrs. Stowe's 'Sunny Memories,' and like the naturalness and simplicity of the book much, in spite of the provincialism of the tone of mind and education, and the really wretched writing. It's quite wonderful that a woman who has written a book to make the world ring should write so abominably. . . .

Do you hear often from Mr. Chorley? Mr. Kenyon complains of never seeing him. He seems to have with-

drawn a good deal, perhaps into closer occupations, who knows? Aubrey de Vere told a friend of ours in Paris the other day that Mr. Patmore was engaged on a poem which 'was to be the love poem of the age,' parts of which he, Aubrey de Vere, had seen. Last week I was vexed by the sight of Mrs. Trollope's card, brought in because we were at dinner. I should have liked to have seen her for the sake of the opportunity of talking of *you*.

Do you know the engravings in the 'Story without an End'? The picture of the 'child' is just my Penini. Some one was observing it the other day, and I thought I would tell you, that you might image him to yourself. Think of his sobbing and screaming lately because of the Evangelist John being sent to Patmos. 'Just like poor Robinson Crusoe!' said he. I scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry, I was so astonished at this crisis of emotion.

Robert's love will be put in. May God bless you and keep you, and love you better than we all.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Casa Guidi: February 13, [1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin,— How am I to thank you for this most beautiful shawl, looking fresh from Galatea's flocks, and woven by something finer than her fingers? You are too good and kind, and I shall wrap myself in this piece of affectionateness on your part with very pleasant feelings. Thank you, thank you. I only wish I could have seen you (though more or less dimly, it would have been a satisfaction) in the face of your friend who was so kind as to bring the parcel to me. But I have been very unwell, and was actually in bed when he called; unwell with the worst attack on the chest I ever suffered from in Italy. Oh, I should have written to you long since if it had not been for

this. For a month past or more I have been ill. Now, indeed, I consider myself convalescent; the exhausting cough and night fever are gone, I may say, the pulse quiet, and, though considerably weakened and pulled down, that will be gradually remedied as long as this genial mildness of the weather lasts. You were quite right in supposing us struck here by the cold of which you complained even at Pau. Not only here but at Pisa there has been snow and frost, together with a bitter wind which my precaution of keeping steadily to two rooms opening one into another could not defend me from. My poor Robert has been horribly vexed about me, of course, and indeed suffered physically at one time through sleepless nights, diversified by such pastimes as keeping fires alight and warming coffee, &c., &c. Except for love's sake it wouldn't be worth while to live on at the expense of doing so much harm, but you needn't exhort — I don't give it up. I mean to live on and be well.

In the meantime, in generous exchange for your miraculous shawl, I send you back sixpence worth of rhymes. They were written for Arabel's Ragged School bazaar last spring (she wanted our names), and would not be worth your accepting but for the fact of their not being purchaseable anywhere.[1] A few copies were sent out to us lately. Half I draw back my hand as I give you this little pamphlet, because I seem to hear dear Mr. Martin's sardonic laughter at my phrase about the Czar. 'If she wink, &c.' Well, I don't generally sympathise with the boasting mania of my countrymen, but it's so much in the blood that, even with *me*, it exceeds now and then, you observe. Ask him to be as gentle with me as possible.

[1] Mrs. Browning's 'Song for the Ragged Schools of London' (*Poetical Works*, iv. 270) and her husband's 'The Twins' were printed together as a small pamphlet for sale at Miss Arabella Barrett's bazaar. Mrs. Browning's poem had been written before they left Rome.

Oh, the East, the East! My husband has been almost frantic on the subject. We may all cover our heads and be humble.[1] Verily we have sinned deeply. As to ministers, that there is blame I do not doubt. The Aberdeen element has done its worst, but our misfortune is that nobody is responsible; and that if you tear up Mr. So-and-so and Lord So-and-so limb from limb, as a mild politician recommended the other day, you probably would do a gross injustice against very well-meaning persons. It's the system, the system which is all one gangrene; the most corrupt system in Europe, is it not? Here is my comfort. Apart from the dreadful amount of individual suffering which cries out against us to heaven and earth, this adversity may teach us much, this shock which has struck to the heart of England may awaken us much, and this humiliation will altogether be good for us. We have stood too long on a pedestal talking of our moral superiority, our political superiority, and all our other superiorities, which I have long been sick of hearing recounted. Here's an inferiority proved. Let us understand it and remedy it, and not talk, talk, any more.

[*Part of this letter has been cut out.*]

We heard yesterday from the editor of the 'Examiner,' Mr. Forster, who expects some terrible consequence of present circumstances in England, as far as I can understand. The alliance with France is full of consolation. There seems to be a real heart-union between the peoples. What a grand thing the Napoleon loan is! It has struck the English with admiration.

I heard, too, among other English news, that Walter Savage Landor, who has just kept his eightieth birthday, and is as young and impetuous as ever, has caught the whooping cough by way of an illustrative accident. King-

[1] The horrors of the Crimean winter were now becoming known, which fully accounts for this outburst.

lake ('Eothen') came home from the Crimea (where he went out and fought as an amateur) with fever, which has left one lung diseased. He is better, however. . . .

Dearest Mrs. Martin, dearest friends, be both of you well and strong. Shall we not meet in Paris this early summer?

May God bless you! Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: February 24, 1855.

The devil (say charitable souls) is not as bad as he is painted, and even I, dearest Mona Nina, am better than I seem. In the first place, let me make haste to say that I *never received* the letter you sent me to Rome with the information of your family affliction, and that, if I had, it could never have remained an unnoticed letter. I am not so untender, so unsympathising, not so brutal — let us speak out. I lost several letters in Rome, besides a good deal of illusion. I did not like Rome, I think I confessed to you. In the second place, when your last letter reached me — I mean the letter in which you told me to write to you directly — I *would* have written directly, but was so very unwell that you would not have wished me even to try if, absent in the flesh, you had been present in spirit. I have had a severe attack on the chest — the worst I ever had in Italy — the consequence of exceptionally severe weather — a bitter wind and frost together — which quite broke me up with cough and fever at night. Now I am well again, only of course much weakened, and grown thin. I mean to get fat again upon cod's liver oil, in order to appear in England with some degree of decency. You know I'm a lineal descendant of the White Cat, and have seven lives accordingly. Also I have a trick of falling from six-storey windows upon my feet, in the manner of the traditions of my race. Not only I die hard, but I can hardly die.

'Half of it would kill *me*,' said an admiring friend the other day. 'What strength you must have.' A questionable advantage, except that I have also — a Robert, and a Penini!

Dearest friend, I don't know how to tell you of our fullness of sympathy in your late trials.[1] From a word which reached us from England the other day, there will be, I do trust, some effectual arrangement to relieve your friends from their anxieties about you. Then, there should be an increase of the Government pension by another hundred, that is certain; only the 'should be' lies so far out of sight in the ideal, that nobody in his senses should calculate on its occurrence. As to Law, it's different from Right — particularly in England perhaps — and appeals to Law are disastrous when they cannot be counted on as victorious, always and certainly. Therefore you may be wise in abstaining; you have considered sufficiently, of course. I only hope you are not trammelled in any degree by motives of delicacy which would be preposterous under the actual circumstances. You meantime are as nobly laborious as ever. We have caught hold of fragments in the newspapers from your 'Commonplace Book,' which made us wish for more; and Mr. Kenyon told me of a kind mention of Robert which was very pleasant to me.

How will it be? Shall you be likely to come to Italy before we set out to the north — that is, before the middle of May — or shall we cross on the road, like our letters, or shall we catch you in London, or in Paris at least? Oh, you won't miss the Exhibition in Paris. That seems certain.

I know Florence Nightingale slightly. She came to see me when we were in London last; and I remember her face and her graceful manner, and the flowers she sent me after-

[1] The death of Mrs. Jameson's husband in 1854 had left her in very straitened circumstances, which were ultimately relieved, in part, by a subscription among her friends and the admirers of her works.

wards. I honor her from my heart. She is an earnest, noble woman, and has fulfilled her woman's duty where many men have failed.

At the same time, I confess myself to be at a loss to see any new position for the sex, or the most imperfect solution of the 'woman's question,' in this step of hers. If a movement at all, it is retrograde, a revival of old virtues! Since the siege of Troy and earlier, we have had princesses binding wounds with their hands; it's strictly the woman's part, and men understand it so, as you will perceive by the general adhesion and approbation on this late occasion of the masculine dignities. Every man is on his knees before ladies carrying lint, calling them 'angelic she's,' whereas, if they stir an inch as thinkers or artists from the beaten line (involving more good to general humanity than is involved in lint), the very same men would curse the impudence of the very same women and stop there. I can't see on what ground you think you see here the least gain to the 'woman's question,' so called. It's rather *the contrary*, to my mind, and, any way, the women of England must give the precedence to the *sœurs de charité*, who have magnificently won it in all matters of this kind. For my own part (and apart from the exceptional miseries of the war), I acknowledge to you that I do not consider the best use to which we can put a gifted and accomplished woman is to *make her a hospital nurse*. If it is, why then woe to us all who are artists! The woman's question is at an end. The men's 'noes' carry it. For the future I hope you will know your place and keep clear of Raffaelle and criticism; and I shall expect to hear of you as an organiser of the gruel department in the hospital at Greenwich, that is, if you have the luck to *percer* and distinguish yourself.

Oh, the Crimea! How dismal, how full of despair and horror! The results will, however, be good if we are induced to come down from the English pedestal in Europe of incessant self-glorification, and learn that our close,

stifling, corrupt system gives no air nor scope for healthy and effective organisation anywhere. We are oligarchic in all things, from our parliament to our army. Individual interests are admitted as obstacles to the general prosperity. This plague runs through all things with us. It accounts for the fact that, according to the last marriage statistics, thirty per cent. of the male population signed with the *mark* only. It accounts for the fact that London is at once the largest and ugliest city in Europe. For the rest, if we cannot fight righteous and necessary battles, we must leave our place as a nation, and be satisfied with making pins. Write to me, but don't pay your letters, dear dear friend, and I will tell you why. Through some slip somewhere we have had to pay your two last letters just the same. So don't try it any more. Do you think we grudge postage from you? Tell me if it is true that Harriet Martineau is very ill. What do you hear of her?

May God bless you. With Robert's true love,

Your ever affectionate

BA.

The following letter is the first of a few addressed to Mr. Ruskin, which have been made available through the kindness of Mrs. Arthur Severn. The acquaintanceship with Mr. Ruskin dated from the visit of the Brownings to England in 1852 (see vol. ii. p. 87, above); but the occasion of the present correspondence was the recent death of Miss Mitford, which took place on January 10, 1855. Mr. Ruskin had shown much kindness to her during her later years, and after her death had written to Mrs. Browning to tell her of the closing scenes of her friend's life.

To Mr. Ruskin

Florence: March 17, 1855.

I have your letter, dear Mr. Ruskin. The proof is the pleasure it has given me — yes, and given my husband,

which is better. 'When has a letter given me so much pleasure?' he exclaimed, after reading it; 'will you write?' I thank you much—much for thinking of it, and I shall be thankful of anything you can tell me of dearest Miss Mitford. I had a letter from her just before she went, written in so firm a hand, and so vital a spirit, that I could feel little apprehension of never seeing her in the body again. God's will be done. It is better so, I am sure. She seemed to me to see her way clearly, and to have as few troubling doubts in respect to the future life as she had to the imminent end of the present.

Often we have talked and thought of you since the last time we saw you, and, before your letter came, we had ventured to put on the list of expected pleasures connected with our visit to England, fixed for next summer, the pleasure of seeing more of Mr. Ruskin. For the rest, there will be some bitter things too. I do not miss them generally in England, and among them this time will be an empty place where I used always to find a tender and too indulgent friend.

You need not be afraid of my losing a letter of yours. The peril would be mine in that case. But among the advantages of our Florence—the art, the olives, the sunshine, the cypresses, and don't let me forget the Arno and mountains at sunset time—is that of an all but infallible post-office. One loses letters at Rome. Here, I think, we have lost *one* in the course of eight years, and for that loss I hold my correspondent to blame.

How good you are to me! How kind! The soul of a cynic, at its third stage of purification, might feel the value of 'Gold' laid on the binding of a book by the hand of John Ruskin. Much more I, who am apt to get too near that ugly 'sty of Epicurus' sometimes! Indeed you have gratified me deeply. There was 'once on a time,' as is said in the fairy tales, a word dropped by you in one of your books, which I picked up and wore for a crown.

Your words of goodwill are of great price to me always, and one of my dear friend Miss Mitford's latest kindnesses to me was copying out and sending to me a sentence from a letter of yours which expressed a favorable feeling towards my writings. She knew well — she who knew me — the value it would have for me, and the courage it would give me for any future work.

With my husband's cordial regards,

I remain most truly yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Our American friends, who sent to Dresden in vain for your letter, are here now, but will be in England soon on their way to America, with the hope of trying fate again in another visit to you. Thank you! Also thank you for your inquiry about my health. I have had a rather bad attack on my chest (never very strong) through the weather having been colder than usual here, but now I am very well again — for *me*.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: April 20, 1855.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Having nine lives, as I say, I am alive again, and prosperous — thanking you for wishing to know. People look at me and laugh, because it's a clear case of bulbous root with me — let me pass (being humble) for the onion. I was looking miserable in February, and really could scarcely tumble across the room, and now I am up on my perch again — nay, even out of my cage door. The weather is divine. One feels in one's self why the trees are green. I go out, walk out, have recovered flesh and fire — my very hair curls differently. '*Is I, I?*' I say with the metaphysicians. There's something vital about this Florence air, for, though much given to resurrection, I never made such a leap in my life before after illness. Robert and I need to run as well as leap. We have quantities of

work to do, and small time to do it in. He is four hours a day engaged in dictating to a friend of ours who transcribes for him, and I am not even ready for transcription — have not transcribed a line of my six or seven thousand. We go to England, or at least to Paris, next month, but it can't be early. Oh, may we meet you! Our little Penini is radiant, and altogether we are all in good spirits. Which is a shame, you will say, considering the state of affairs at Sebastopol. Forgive me. I never, at worst, thought that the great tragedy of the world was going on *there*. It was tragic, but there are more chronic cruelties and deeper despairs — ay, and more exasperating wrongs. For the rest, we have the most atrocious system in Europe, and we mean to work it out. Oh, you will see. Your committees nibble on, and this and that poisonous berry is pulled off leisurely, while the bush to the root of it remains, and the children eat on unhindered on the other side. I had hoped that there was real feeling among politicians. But no; we are put off with a fast day. There, an end! I begin to think that nothing will do for England but a good revolution, and a 'besom of destruction' used dauntlessly. We are getting up our vainglories again, smoothing our peacock's plumes. We shall be as exemplary as ever by next winter, you will see.

Meanwhile, dearest Mrs. Martin, that *you* should ask me about 'Armageddon' is most assuredly a sign of the times. You know I pass for being particularly mad myself, and everybody, almost universally, is rather mad, as may be testified by the various letters I have to read about 'visible spirit-hands,' pianos playing themselves, and flesh-and-blood human beings floating about rooms in company with tables and lamps. Dante has pulled down his own picture from the wall of a friend of ours in Florence five times, signifying his pleasure that it should be destroyed at once as unauthentic (our friend burnt it directly, which will encourage me to pull down mine by [*word lost*]). Savonarola also has said one or

two things, and there are gossiping guardian angels, of whom I need not speak. Let me say, though, that nothing has surprised me quite so much as *your* inquiring about Armageddon, because I am used to think of you as the least in the world of a theorist, and am half afraid of you sometimes, and range the chairs before my speculative dark corners, that you may not think or see 'how very wild that Ba is getting!' Well, now it shall be my turn to be sensible and unbelieving. There's a forced similitude certainly, in the etymology, between the two words; but if it were full and perfect I should be no nearer thinking that the battle of Armageddon could ever signify anything but a great spiritual strife. The terms, taken from a symbolical book, are plainly to my mind symbolical, and Dr. Cumming and a thousand mightier doctors could not talk it out of me, I think. I don't, for the rest, like Dr. Cumming; his books seem to me very narrow. Isn't the tendency with us all to magnify the great events of our own time, just as we diminish the small events? For me, I am heretical in certain things. I expect *no* renewal of the Jewish kingdom, for instance. And I doubt much whether Christ's 'second coming' will be personal. The end of the world is probably the end of a dispensation. What I expect is, a great development of Christianity in opposition to the churches, and of humanity generally in opposition to the nations, and I look out for this in much quiet hope. Also, and in the meanwhile, the war seems to be just and necessary. There is nothing in it to regret, except the way of conducting it. . . .

Write to me soon again, and tell me as much of both of you as you can put into a letter.

May God bless you always.

With Robert's warm regards, both of you think of me as

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Braun

Florence: May 13, [1855].

My dearest Madame Braun, — You have classed me and ticketed me before now, I think, as among the ungrateful of the world; yet I am grateful, grateful, grateful! When your book[1] came (how very kind you were to send it to me!) and when I had said so some five times running, in came somebody who was *fanatico per Roma*, and reverential in proportion for Dr. Braun, who with some sudden appeal to my sensibility — the softer just then that I was only just recovering strength after a sharp winter attack — swept the volume off the table and carried it off out of the house to study the contents at leisure. I expected it back the next week, but it lingered. And I really hadn't the audacity to write to you and say, 'Thank you, but I have looked as yet simply at the title-page.' Well, at last it comes home, and I turn the leaves, examine, read, approve, like Ludovisi and the Belvedere, with a double pleasure of association, and become *qualified* properly to thank you and Dr. Braun from Robert and myself for this gift to us and valuable contribution to archæological literature. I am only sorry I did not get to Rome after the book; it would have helped my pleasure so, holding up the lanthorn in dark places. So much suggestiveness in combination with so much specific information makes a book (or a man) worth knowing.

Of late, other hindrances have come to writing this, in the shape of various labours of Hercules, which fall sometimes to Omphale as well. We go to England in a week or two or three, and we take between us some sixteen thousand lines, eight on one side, eight on the other, which ought to be ready for publication. I have not finished my seventh thousand yet; Robert is at his mark. Then, I have to see that we have shoes and stockings to go in, and that Penini's little trousers are creditably frilled and tucked. Then,

[1] Dr. Braun's *Ruins and Museums of Rome* (1854).

about twenty letters lie by me waiting to be answered in time, so as to save me from a mobbing in England. Then there are visits to be paid all round in Florence, to make amends for the sins of the winter; visiting, like almsgiving, being put generally in the place of virtue, when the latter is found too inconvenient. Altogether, my head swims and my heart ticks before the day's done, with positive weariness. For there are Penini's lessons, you are to understand, besides the rest. And 'between the intersections,' cod liver oil to be taken judiciously, in order to appear before my English friends with due decency of corporeal coverture.

Well, now, do tell me, *shall* you go to England, *you?* You will see my reasons for being very interested. Oh, I hope you won't be snatched away to Naples, or nailed down at Rome. Railroads open from Marseilles; the exhibition open at Paris! Surely, surely Dr. Braun will go to Paris to see the exhibition. His conscience won't let him off. Tell him too, *from me*, that in London he may *see a spirit* if he will go for it. I have a letter from a friend who swears to me he has shaken hands with three or four — 'softer, more thrilling than any woman's hand' — 'tenderly touching' — think of that! The American 'medium' Hume is turning the world upside down in London with this spiritual influx.

Let me remember to tell you. Your paper *was in the 'Athenæum.'* Therefore, if you were not paid for it, it was the more abominable. Robert saw it with his own eyes, printed. When I heard from you that you had heard nothing, I mentioned the circumstance to Mrs. Jameson in a letter I was writing to her, and I do hope she has not neglected since to give you some information at least. You are aware probably of the excellent effect with which that kind Mrs. Procter has managed a private subscription in behalf of dear Mrs. Jameson, in consequence of which she will be placed in circumstances of ease for the rest of her life. Fanny Kemble nobly gave a hundred pounds towards this good purpose. Mrs. Jameson spoke in her last letter

of coming to Italy this summer, and I dare say we shall have the ill luck to lose her, miss her, cross her *en route*, perhaps.

We hear from dear Mr. Kenyon and from Miss Bayley; each very well and full of animation. If it were not for them, and my dear sisters, and one or two other hands I shall care to clasp (besides the spirits!) I would give much not to go north. Oh, we Italians grow out of the English bark; it won't hold us after a time. Such a happy year I have had this last! I do love Florence so! When Penini says, 'Sono Italiano, vogilo essere Italiano,' I agree with him perfectly.

So we shall come back of course, if we live; indeed, we leave this house ready to come back to, meaning, if we can, to let our rooms simply.

Little Penini looks like a rose, and has, besides, the understanding and sweetness of a creature 'a little lower than the angels.' I don't care any less for him than I did, upon the whole.

I hear the Sartoris's think of Paris for next winter, and mean to give up Rome. She has been a good deal secluded, until quite lately, they say, on account of her father's death, and brother's worse than death, which may account in part for any backwardness you may have observed. As to her 'not liking Dr. Braun,' do *you* believe in anybody's not liking Dr. Braun? *I* don't — quite. It's more difficult for me to 'receive' than the notion of the spiritual hand — 'tenderly touching.'

Do you know young Leighton[1] of Rome? If so, you will be glad of this wonderful success of his picture,[2] bought by the Queen, and applauded by the Academicians, and he not twenty-five.

[1] The late Lord Leighton, P.R.A.

[2] The picture of Cimabue's Madonna carried in procession through the streets of Florence. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1855, and was bought by the Queen.

The lady who brought your book did not leave her name here, so of course she did not *mean* to be called on.

Our kindest regards for dear Dr. Braun, and repeated truest thanks to both of you. Among his discoveries and inventions, he will invent some day an Aladdin's lamp, and then you will be suddenly potentates, and vanish in a clap of thunder.

Till then, think of me sometimes, dearest Madame Braun, as I do of *you*, and of all your great kindness to me at Rome.

Ever your affectionate

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Mr. Ruskin

Florence: June 2, 1855.

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I believe I shall rather prove in this letter how my head turns round when I write it, than explain why I didn't write it before — and so you will go on to think me the most unsusceptible and least grateful of human beings — no small distinction in our bad obtuse world. Yet the truth is — oh, the truth is, that I am deeply grateful to you and have felt to the quick of my heart the meaning and kindness of your words, the worth of your sympathy and praise. One thing especially which you said, made me thankful that I had been allowed to live to hear it — since even to fancy that anything I had written could be the means of the least good to *you*, is worth all the trumpet blowing of a vulgar fame. Oh, of course, I do not exaggerate, though your generosity does. I understand the case as it is. We burn straw and it warms us. My verses catch fire from you as you read them, and so you see them in that light of your own. But it is something to be used to such an end by such a man, and I thank you, thank you, and so does my

husband, for the deep pleasure you have given us in the words you have written.

And why not say so sooner? Just because I wanted to say so fully, and because I have been crushed into a corner past all elbow-room for doing anything largely and comfortably, by work and fuss and uncertainty of various kinds. Now it isn't any better scarcely, though it is quite fixed now that we are going from Florence to England — no more of the shadow dancing which is so pretty at the opera and so fatiguing in real life. We are coming, and have finished most of our preparations; conducted on a balance of — must we go? *may* we stay? which is so very inconvenient. If you knew what it is to give up this still dream-life of our Florence, where if one is over-busy ever, the old tapestries on the walls and the pre-Giotto pictures (picked up by my husband for so many pauls) surround us ready to quiet us again — if you knew what it is to give it all up and be put into the mill of a dingy London lodging and ground very small indeed, you wouldn't be angry with us for being sorry to go north — you wouldn't think it unnatural. As for me, I have all sorts of pain in England — everything is against me, except a few things; and yet, while my husband and I groan at one another, strophe and antistrophe (pardon that rag of Greek!) we admit our compensations — that it will be an excellent thing, for instance, to see Mr. Ruskin! Are we likely to undervalue that?

Let me consider how to answer your questions. My poetry — which you are so good to, and which you once thought 'sickly,' you say, and why not? (I have often written sickly poetry, I do not doubt — I have been sickly myself!) — has been called by much harder names, 'affected' for instance, a charge I have never deserved, for I do think, if I may say it of myself, that the desire of speaking or *spluttering* the real truth out broadly, may be a cause of a good deal of what is called in me careless and awkward expression. My friends took some trouble with me at one

time; but though I am not self-willed naturally, as you will find when you know me, I hope, I never could adopt the counsel urged upon me to keep in sight always the stupidest person of my acquaintance in order to clear and judicious forms of composition. Will you set me down as arrogant, if I say that the longer I live in this writing and reading world, the more convinced I am that the mass of readers *never* receive a poet (you, who are a poet yourself, must surely observe that) without intermediation? The few understand, appreciate, and distribute to the multitude below. Therefore to say a thing faintly, because saying it strongly sounds odd or obscure or unattractive for some reason, to 'careless readers,' does appear to me bad policy as well as bad art. Is not art, like virtue, to be practised for its own sake first? If we sacrifice our ideal to notions of immediate utility, would it not be better for us to write tracts at once.

Of course any remark of yours is to be received and considered with all reverence. Only, be sure you please to say, 'Do it differently to satisfy *me*, John Ruskin,' and not to satisfy Mr., Mrs. and the Miss and Master Smith of the great majority. The great majority is the majority of the little, you know, who will come over to you if you don't think of them — and if they don't, you will bear it.

Am I pert, do you think? No, *don't* think it. And the truth is, though you may not see that, that your praise made me feel very humble. Nay, I was quite *abashed* at the idea of the 'illumination' of my poem; and still I keep winking my eyes at the prospect of so much glory. If you were a woman, I might say, when one feels ugly one pulls down the blinds; but as a man you are superior to the understanding of such a figure, and so I must simply tell you that you honor me over much indeed. My husband is very much pleased, and particularly pleased that you selected 'Catarina,' which is his favourite among my poems for some personal fanciful reasons besides the rest.

But to go back. I said that any remark of yours was to be received by me in all reverence; and truth is a part of reverence, so I shall end by telling you the truth, that I think you quite wrong in your objection to 'nympholept.' Nympholepsy is no more a Greek word than epilepsy, and nobody would or could object to epilepsy or apoplexy as a Greek word. It's a word for a specific disease or mania among the ancients, that mystical passion for an invisible nymph common to a certain class of visionaries. Indeed, I am not the first in referring to it in English literature. De Quincey has done so in prose, for instance, and Lord Byron talks of 'The nympholepsy of a fond despair,' though *he* never was accused of being overridden by his Greek. Tell me now if I am not justified, I also? We are all nympholepts in running after our ideals — and none more than yourself, indeed!

Our American friend Mr. Jarves wrote to us full of gratitude and gratification on account of your kindness to him, for which we also should thank you. Whether he felt most overjoyed by the clasp of your hand or that of a disembodied spirit, which he swears was as real (under the mediumship of Hume, his compatriot), it was somewhat difficult to distinguish. But all else in England seemed dull and worthless in comparison with those two 'manifestations,' the spirits' and yours!

How very very kind of your mother to think of my child! and how happy I am near the end of my paper, not to be tempted on into 'descriptions' that 'hold the place of sense.' He is six years old, he reads English and Italian, and writes without lines, and shall I send you a poem of his for 'illumination'? His poems are far before mine, the very prattle of the angels, when they stammer at first and are not sure of the pronunciation of *es* and *is* in the spiritual heavens (see Swedenborg). Really he is a sweet good child, and I am not bearable in my conceit of him, as you see! My thankful regards to your mother, whom I shall hope to

meet with you, and do yourself accept as much from us both.

Most truly yours,
Elizabeth B. Browning.

We leave Florence next week, and spend at least a week in Paris, 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées.

To Miss Browning

Florence: June 12, 1855 [postmark].

How kind and tender of you, my dearest Sarianna, to care so much to hear that I am better. I was afraid that Robert had written in the Crimean style about me, for he was depressed and uneasy, poor darling, and looked at things from the blackest point of view. Nevertheless, I have escaped some bad symptoms. No spitting of blood, for instance, no loss of voice, and scarcely a threatening of pain in the side. Also I have not grown thinner than is natural under the circumstances. At Genoa (after our cold journey[1]) I *wasted* in a few days, and thought much worse of myself than there was reason to do this time.

I can assure you I am now much restored. The cough is decidedly got under, and teases me, for the most part, only in the early morning; the fever is gone, and the nights are quiet. I am able to take animal food again, and shall soon recover my ordinary strength. Certainly it has been a bad attack, and I never suffered anything like it in Italy before. The illness at Genoa was the mere *tail* of what began in England, and was increased by the Alpine exposure. Our weather has been very severe — wind and frost together — something peculiarly irritating in the air. I am loth to blame my poor Florence, who never treated me so before (and how many winters we have spent here!) — and our friends write from Pisa that the weather was as trying

[1] In 1852.

there, while from Rome the account is simply 'detestable weather.' At Naples it is sometimes furiously cold; there's no perfect climate anywhere, that's certain. You have only to choose the least evil. Here for the last week it has been so mild that, if I had been in my usual state of health, I might have gone out, they say; and, of course, I have felt the influence beneficially. One encourages oneself in Italy when it is cold, with the assurance that it can't last. Our misfortune this time has been that it has lasted unusually long. How the Italians manage without fires I cannot make out. So chilly as they are, too, it's a riddle.

You would wonder almost how I could feel the cold in these two rooms opening into each other, and from which I have not stirred since the cold weather began. Robert has kept up the fire in our bedroom throughout the night. Oh, he has been spoiling me so. If it had not been that I feared much to hurt him in having him so disturbed and worried, it would have been a very subtle luxury to me, this being ill and feeling myself dear. Do not set me down as too selfish. May God bless him. . . .

Robert has been frantic about the Crimea, and 'being disgraced in the face of Europe,' &c. &c. When he is mild he wishes the ministry to be torn to pieces in the streets, limb from limb. I do not doubt that the Aberdeen side of the Cabinet has been greatly to blame, but the system is the root of the whole evil; if they don't tear up the system they may tear up the Aberdeens 'world without end,' and not better the matter; if they do tear up the system, then shall we all have reason to rejoice at these disasters, apart from our sympathy with individual sufferings. More good will have been done by this one great shock to the heart of England than by fifty years' more patching, and pottering, and knocking impotent heads together. What makes me most angry is the ministerial apology. 'It's always so with us for three campaigns,'! ! ! 'it's our way,' 'it's want of experience,' &c. &c. That's precisely the

thing complained of. As to want of experience, if the French have had Algerine experiences, we have had our Indian wars, Chinese wars, Caffre wars, and military and naval expenses *exceeding* those of France from year to year. If our people had never had to pay for an army, they might sit down quietly under the taunt of wanting experience. But we have soldiers, and soldiers should have military education as well as red coats, and be led by properly qualified officers, instead of Lord Nincompoop's youngest sons. As it is in the army, so it is in the State. Places given away, here and there, to incompetent heads; nobody being responsible, no unity of idea and purpose anywhere — the individual interest always in the way of the general good. There is a noble heart in our people, strong enough if once roused, to work out into light and progression, and correct all these evils. Robert is a good deal struck by the generous tone of the observations of the French press, as contradistinguished from the insolences of the Americans, who really are past enduring just now. Certain of our English friends here in Florence have ceased to associate with them on that ground. I think there's a good deal of jealousy about the French alliance. That may account for something. . . .

Dearest, kindest Sarianna, remember not to think any more about me, except that I love you, that I am your attached

BA.

CHAPTER IX

1855–1859

ABOUT a month after the date of the last letter, Mr. and Mrs. Browning left Italy for the second time. As on the previous occasion (1851–2), their absence extended over two summers and a winter, the latter being spent in Paris, while portions of each summer were given up to visits to England. Each of them was bringing home an important work for publication, Mr. Browning's 'Men and Women' containing much of his very greatest poetry, being passed through the press in 1855, while Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh,' although more than half of it had been written before she left Florence, was not ready for printing until the following year. They travelled direct from Florence to London, arriving there apparently in the course of July, and taking up their quarters at 13 Dorset Street. Their stay there was made memorable, as Mrs. Browning records below, by a visit from Tennyson, who read to them, on September 27, his new poem of 'Maud;' and it was while he was thus employed that Rossetti drew a well-known portrait of the Laureate in pen and ink. But in spite of glimpses of Tennyson, Ruskin, Carlyle, Kenyon, and other friends, the visit to England was, on the whole, a painful one to Mrs. Browning. Intercourse with her own family did not run smooth. One sister was living at too great a distance to see her; the other was kept out of her reach, for a considerable part of

the time, by her father. In addition, a third member of the Barrett family, her brother Alfred, earned excommunication from his father's house by the unforgivable offence of matrimony. Altogether it was not without a certain feeling of relief that, in the middle of October, Mrs. Browning, with her husband and child, left England for Paris. The whole visit had been so crowded with work and social engagements as to leave little time for correspondence; and the letters for the period are consequently few and short.

To Mrs. Martin

13 Dorset Street, Baker Street:
Tuesday, [July–August 1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I have waited days and days in the answering of your dear, kind, welcoming letter, and yet I have been very very grateful for it. Thank you. I need such things in England above other places.

For the rest, we could not go to Herefordshire, even if I were rational, which I am not; I could as soon open a coffin as do it: there's the truth. The place is nothing to me, of course, only the string round a faggot burnt or scattered. But if I went there, the thought of *one face* which never ceases to be present with me (and which I parted from for ever in my poor blind unconsciousness with a pettish word) would rise up, put down all the rest, and prevent my having one moment of ordinary calm intercourse with you, so don't ask me; set it down to mania or obstinacy, but I never *could* go into that neighbourhood, except to die, which I think sometimes I should like. So you may have me some day when the physicians give me up, but then, you won't, you know, and it wouldn't, any way, be merry visiting.

Foolish to write all this! As if any human being could

know thoroughly what *he* was to me. It must seem so extravagant, and perhaps affected, even to *you*, who are large-hearted and make allowances. After these years!

And, after all, I might have just said the other truth, that we are at the end of our purse, and can't travel any more, not even to Taunton, where poor Henrietta, who is hindered from coming to me by a like pecuniary straitness, begs so hard that we should go. Also, we are bound to London by business engagements; a book in the press (Robert's two volumes), and *proofs* coming in at all hours. We have been asked to two or three places at an hour's distance from London, and can't stir; to Knebworth, for instance, where Sir Edward Lytton wants us to go. It would be amusing in some ways; but we are tired. Also Robert's sister is staying with us.

Also, we shall see you in Paris on the way to Pau next November, shall we not? Write and tell me that we shall, and that you are not disgusted with me meanwhile.

Do you know our news? Alfred is just married at the Paris Embassy to Lizzie Barrett. . . . Of course, he makes the third exile from Wimpole Street, the course of true love running remarkably rough in our house. For the rest, there have been no *scenes*, I thank God, for dearest Arabel's sake. He had written to my father nine or ten days before the ceremony, received no answer, and followed up the silence rather briskly by another letter to announce his marriage. . . . I am going to write to him at Marseilles.

You cannot imagine to yourself the unsatisfactory and disheartening turmoil in which we are at present. It's the mad bull and the china shop, and, *nota bene*, we are the china shop. People want to see if Italy has cut off our noses, or what! A very kind anxiety certainly, but so horribly fatiguing that my heart sinks, and my brain goes round under the process. O my Florence! how much better you are!

Have you heard that Wilson is married to a Florentine

who lived once with the Peytons, and is here now with us, a good tender-hearted man?[1]

I am tolerably well, though to breathe this heavy air always strikes me as difficult; and my little Penini is very well, thank God. I want so much to show him to you. We shall be here till the end of September, if the weather admits of it, then go to Paris for the winter, then return to London, and then — why, *that* 'then' is too far off to see. Only we talk of Italy in the distance.

My book is not ready for the press yet; and as to writing here, who could produce an epic in the pauses of a summerset? Not that my poem is an epic, I hurry on to say in consideration for dear Mr. Martin's feelings. I flatter myself it's a *novel*, rather, a sort of novel in verse. Arabel looks well.

What pens! What ink! Do write, and tell me of *you both*. I love you cordially indeed.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

13 Dorset Street: Tuesday, [July–August 1855].

My dearest Mona Nina, — I write to you in the midst of so much fatigue and unsatisfactory turmoil, that I feel I shall scarcely be articulate in what I say. Still, it must be tried, for I can't have you think that I have come to London to forget you, much less to be callous to the influence of this dear affectionate letter of yours. May God bless you! How sorry I am that you should have vexation on the top of more serious hurts to depress you. Indeed, if it were not for the *other side of the tapestry*, it would seem not at all worth while for us to stand putting in

[1] Ferdinando Romagnoli. He died at Venice, in the Palazzo Rezzonico, January 1893. His widow (who, as the following letters show, continued to be called Wilson in the family) is still living with Mr. R. B. Browning.

more weary Gobelin stitches (till we turn into goblins) day after day, year after year, in this sad world. For my part, I am ready at melancholy with anybody. The air, mentally or physically considered, is very heavy for me here, and I long for the quiet of my Florence, where somehow it always has gone best with my life. As to England, it affects me so, in body, soul, and circumstances, that if I could not get away soon, I should be provoked, I think, into turning monster and *hating* the whole island, which shocks you so to hear, that you will be provoked into not loving me, perhaps, and *that* would really be too hard, after all.

The best news I can give you is that Robert has printed the first half volume of his poems, and that the work looks better than ever in print, as all true work does brought into the light. He has read these proofs to Mr. Fox (of Oldham), who gives an opinion that the poems are at the top of art in their kind. I don't know whether you care for Mr. Fox's opinion, but it's worth more than mine, of course, on the ground of *impartiality*, to say no otherwise, and it will disappoint me much if you don't confirm both of us presently. The poems, for variety, vitality, and intensity, are quite worthy of the writer, it seems to me, and a clear advance in certain respects on his previous productions.

Has 'Maud' penetrated to you? The winding up is magnificent, full of power, and there are beautiful thrilling bits before you get so far. Still, there is an appearance of labour in the early part; the language is rather encrusted by skill than spontaneously blossoming, and the rhythm is not always happy. The poet seems to aim at more breadth and freedom, which he attains, but at the expense of his characteristic delicious music. People in general appear very unfavourably impressed by this poem, *very unjustly*, Robert and I think. On some points it is even an advance. The sale is great, *nearly five thousand copies already*.

Let me see what London news I have to tell you. We spent an evening with Mr. Ruskin, who was gracious and generous, and strengthened all my good impressions. Robert took our friend young Leighton to see him afterwards, and was as kindly received. We met Carlyle at Mr. Forster's, and found him in great force, particularly in the damnatory clauses. Mr. Kinglake we saw twice at the Procters', and once here. . . . The Procters are very well. How I like Adelaide's face! that's a face worth a drove of beauties! Dear Mrs. Sartoris has just left London, I grieve to say; and so has Mrs. Kemble, who (let me say it quick in a parenthesis) is looking quite magnificent just now, with those gorgeous eyes of hers. Mr. Kenyon, too, has vanished — gone with his brother to the Isle of Wight. The weather has been very uncertain, cloudy, misty, and rainy, with heavy air, ever since we came. Ferdinando keeps saying, 'Povera gente, che deve vivere in questo posto,' and Penini catches it up, and gives himself immense airs, discoursing about Florentine skies and the glories of the Cascine to anyone who will listen. The child is well, thank God, and in great spirits, which is my comfort. I found my dear sister Arabel, too, well, and it is deep yet sad joy to me to look in her precious loving eyes, which never failed me, nor could. Henrietta will be hindered, perhaps, from coming to see me by want of means, poor darling; and the same cause will keep me from going to Taunton. We have a quantity of invitations to go into the country, to the Custs, to the Martins, &c. &c., and (one which rather tempts *me*) to Knebworth, Sir Edward Lytton having written us the kindest of possible invitations; but none of these things are for us, I see.

Dearest friend, I do hope you won't go to Rome this winter. When you have been to Vienna, come back, and let us have you in Paris. I am glad Lady Elgin liked the book. The history of it was that she asked Robert to get it for her, and he *presented* it instead.

Our M. Milsand likes you much, he says, and I like you to hear it. . . .

Oh, we read your graceful, spirited letter in the 'Athenæum.' By the way, did you see the absurd exposition of 'Maud' as an allegory? What pure madness, instead of Maudness!

To Mrs Martin

13 Dorset Street: Monday, [August–September 1855].

Day after day, my dearest Mrs. Martin, I have been meaning to write to you, always in vain, and now I hear from Mrs. Ormus Biddulph that you are not quite well. How is this? Shall I hear soon that you are better? I want something to cheer me up a little. The bull is out of the china shop, certainly, but the broken pottery doesn't enjoy itself much the more for that. I have lost my Arabel (my one light in London), who has had to go away to Eastbourne; very vexed at it, dear darling, though she really required change of air. We, for our parts, are under promise to follow her in a week, as it will be on our way to Paris, and not cost us many shillings over the expenses of the direct route. But the days drag themselves out, and there remains so much work (on proof sheets, &c.) to be done here, that I despond of our being able to move as soon as I fain would. I assure you I am stuffed as hard as a cricket ball with the work of every day, and I have waited in vain for a clear hour to write quietly and comfortably to you, in order to say how your letter touched me, dear dear friend. You always understand. Your sympathy stretches *beyond* points of agreement, which is so rare and so precious, and makes one feel so unspeakably grateful. . . .

London has emptied itself, as you may suppose, by this time. Mrs. Ormus Biddulph was so kind as to wish us to dine with them on Monday (to-day), but we found it abso-

lutely impossible. The few engagements we make we don't keep, and I shall try for the future to avoid perjury. As it is, I have no doubt that various people have set me down as 'full of arrogance and assumption,' at which the gods must laugh, for really, if truths could be known, I feel even morbidly humble just now, and could show my sackcloth with anybody's sackcloth. But it is difficult to keep to the conventions rigidly, and return visits to the hour, and hold engagements to the minute, when one has neither carriage, nor legs, nor time at one's disposal, which is my case. If I don't at once answer (for instance) such a letter as you sent me, I must be a beggar. . . .

May God bless you both, my very dear friends. My husband bids me remember him to you in cordial regard. I long to see you, and to hear (first) that you are well.

Dearest Mrs. Martin's ever attached

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

13 Dorset Street: Tuesday, [October 1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I can't go without writing to you, but I am ground down with last things to do on last days, and it must be a word only. Dearest friend, I have waited morning after morning for a clear half-hour, because I didn't like to do your bidding and write briefly, though now, after all, I am reduced to it. We leave England to-morrow, and shall sleep (D.V.) at 102 *Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain, Paris*, — I am afraid in a scarcely convenient apartment, which a zealous friend, in spite of our own expressed opinion, secured for us for the term of six months, because of certain yellow satin furniture which only she could consider 'worthy of us.' We shall probably have to dress on the staircase, but what matter? There's the yellow satin to fall back upon.

If the rooms are not tenable, we must underlet them, or try. . . .

One of the pleasantest things which has happened to us here is the coming down on us of the Laureate, who, being in London for three or four days from the Isle of Wight, spent two of them with us, dined with us, smoked with us, opened his heart to us (and the second bottle of port), and ended by reading 'Maud' through from end to end, and going away at half-past two in the morning. If I had had a heart to spare, certainly he would have won mine. He is captivating with his frankness, confidingness and unexampled *naïveté!* Think of his stopping in 'Maud' every now and then — 'There's a wonderful touch! That's very tender. How beautiful that is!' Yes, and it *was* wonderful, tender, beautiful, and he read exquisitely in a voice like an organ, rather music than speech.

War, war! It is terrible certainly. But there are worse plagues, deeper griefs, dreader wounds than the physical. What of the forty thousand wretched women in this city? The silent writhing of them is to me more appalling than the roar of the cannons. Then this war is *necessary* on our sides. Is *that* wrong necessary? It is not so clear to me.

Can I write of such questions in the midst of packing?

May God bless you both. Write to me in Paris, and do come soon and find us out.

Robert's love. My love to you both, dearest friends. May God bless you. Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mr. Ruskin

13 Dorset Street:
Tuesday morning, October 17, 1855 [postmark].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I can't express our amount of mortification in being thwarted in the fulfilment of the

promise you allowed us to make to ourselves, that we would go down to you once more before leaving England. What with the crush rather than press of circumstances, I have scarcely needed the weather to pin me to the wall. Sometimes my husband could not go with me, sometimes I couldn't go with him, and always we waited for one another in hope, till this last day overtook us. To-morrow (D.V.) we shall be in Paris. Now, will you believe how we have wished and longed to see you beyond these strait tantalising limits?—how you look to us at this moment like the phantasm of a thing dear and desired, just seen and vanishing? What! are you to be ranked among my spiritualities after all? Forgive me that wrong.

Then you had things to say to me, I know, which in your consideration, and through my cowardice, you did not say, but yet will!

Will you write to me, dear Mr. Ruskin, sometimes, or have I disgusted you so wholly that you won't or can't?

Once, I know, somewhat because of shyness and somewhat because of intense apprehension — somewhat, too, through characteristic stupidity (no contradiction this!) — I said I was grateful to you when you had just bade me not. Well, I really couldn't help it. That's all I can say now. Even if your appreciation were perfectly deserved at all points, why, appreciation means sympathy, and sympathy being the best gift nearly which one human creature can give another, I don't understand (I never could) why it does not deserve thanks. I am stupid perhaps, but for my life I never could help being grateful to the people who loved me, even if they happened to say, 'I can't help it! not I!'

As for Mr. Ruskin, he sees often in his own light. That's what I see and feel.

Will you write to me sometimes? I come back to it. Will you, though I am awkward and shy and obstinate now and then, and a wicked spiritualist to wit — a *realist* in an

out-of-the-world sense — accepting matter as a means (no matter for it otherwise !) ?

Don't give me up, dear Mr. Ruskin ! My husband's truest regards, and farewell from both of us ! I would fain be

Your affectionate friend,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Our address in Paris will be, 102 *Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain.*

The house in the Rue de Grenelle, however, did not prove a success, in spite of the consolations of the yellow satin, and after six weeks of discomfort and house hunting the Brownings moved to 3 Rue de Colisée, which became their home for the next eight months. It was a period, first of illness caused by the unsuitable rooms, and then of hard work for Mrs. Browning, who was engaged in completing 'Aurora Leigh,' while her husband was less profitably employed in the attempt to recast 'Sordello' into a more intelligible form. No such incident as the visits to George Sand marked this stay in Paris, and politics were in a very much less exciting state. The Crimean war was just coming to a close, and public opinion in England was far from satisfied with the conduct of its ally; but on the whole the times were uneventful.

The first letter from Paris has, however, a special interest as containing a very full estimate of the character and genius of Mrs. Browning's dear friend, Miss Mitford. It is addressed to Mr. Ruskin, who had been unceasingly attentive and helpful to Miss Mitford during her declining days.

To Mr. Ruskin

Paris, 102 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain:
November 5, [1855].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I thank you from my heart for your more than interesting letter. You have helped me to see that dear friend of ours, as without you I could not have seen her, in those last affecting days of illness, by the window not only of the house in Berkshire, but of the house of the body and of the material world — an open window through which the light shone, thank God. It would be a comfort to me now if I had had the privilege of giving her a very very little of the great pleasure you certainly gave her (for I know how she enjoyed your visit — she wrote and told me), but I must be satisfied with the thought left to me, that now *she* regrets nothing, not even great pleasures.

I agree with you in much if not in everything you have written of her. It was a great, warm, outflowing heart, and the head was worthy of the heart. People have observed that she resembled Coleridge in her granite forehead — something, too, in the lower part of the face — however unlike Coleridge in mental characteristics, in his tendency to abstract speculation, or indeed his ideality. There might have been, as you suggest, a somewhat different development elsewhere than in Berkshire — not very different, though — souls don't grow out of the ground.

I agree quite with you that she was stronger and wider in her conversation and letters than in her books. Oh, I have said so a hundred times. The heat of human sympathy seemed to bring out her powerful vitality, rustling all over with laces and flowers. She seemed to think and speak stronger holding a hand — not that she required help or borrowed a word, but that the human magnetism acted on her nature, as it does upon men born to speak. Perhaps if she had been a man with a man's opportunities, she

would have spoken rather than written a reputation. Who can say? She hated the act of composition. Did you hear that from her ever?

Her letters were always admirable, but I do most deeply regret that what made one of their greatest charms unfits them for the public — I mean their personal details. Mr. Harness sends to me for letters, and when I bring them up, and with the greatest pain force myself to examine them (all those letters she wrote to me in her warm goodness and affectionateness), I find with wonder and sorrow how only a half-page here and there *could* be submitted to general readers — *could*, with any decency, much less delicacy.

But no, her 'judgment' was not 'unerring.' She was too intensely sympathetical not to err often, and in fact it was singular (or seemed so) what faces struck her as most beautiful, and what books as most excellent. If she loved a person, it was enough. She made mistakes one couldn't help smiling at, till one grew serious to adore her for it. And yet when she read a book, provided it wasn't written by a friend, edited by a friend, lent by a friend, or associated with a friend, her judgment could be fine and discriminating on most subjects, especially upon subjects connected with life and society and manners. Shall I confess? She never taught *me* anything but a very limited admiration of Miss Austen, whose people struck me as wanting souls, even more than is necessary for men and women of the world. The novels are perfect as far as they go — that's certain. Only they don't go far, I think. It may be my fault.

You lay down your finger and stop me, and exclaim that it's my way perhaps to attribute a leaning of the judgment through personal sympathy to people in general — that I do it perhaps to *you*. No, indeed. I can quite easily believe that you don't either think or say 'the pleasantest things to your friends;' in fact, I am sure you don't. You would say them as soon to your enemies — perhaps sooner. Also, when you began to say pleasant things to me, you hadn't a

bit of personal feeling to make a happy prejudice of, and really I can't flatter myself that you have now. What I meant was that you, John Ruskin, not being a critic *sal merum* as the ancients had it, but half critic, and half poet, may be rather encumbered sometimes by the burning imagination in you, may be apt sometimes, when you turn the light of your countenance on a thing, to see the thing lighted up as a matter of course, just as we, when we carried torches into the Vatican, were not perfectly clear how much we brought to that wonderful Demosthenes, folding the marble round him in its thousand folds — how much we brought, and how much we received. Was it the sculptor or was it the torch bearer who produced that effect? And like doubts I have had of you, I confess, and not only when you have spoken kindly of *me*. You don't mistake by your heart, through loving, but you exaggerate by your imagination, through glorifying. There's my thought at least.

But what I meant by 'apprehending too intensely,' dear Mr. Ruskin, don't ask me. Really I have forgotten. I suppose I did mean something, though it was a day of chaos and packing boxes — try to think I did therefore, and let it pass.

You please me — oh, so much — by the words about my husband. When you wrote to praise my poems, of course I had to bear it — I couldn't turn round and say, 'Well, and why don't you praise him, who is worth twenty of me? Praise my second Me, as well as my Me proper, if you please.' One's forced to be rather decent and modest for one's husband as well as for one's self, even if it's harder. I couldn't pull at your coat to read 'Pippa Passes,' for instance. I can't now.

But you have put him on the shelf, so we have both taken courage to send you his new volumes, 'Men and Women,' not that you may say 'pleasant things' of them or think yourself bound to say anything indeed, but that

you may accept them as a sign of the esteem and admiration of both of us. I consider them on the whole an advance upon his former poems, and am ready to die at the stake for my faith in these last, even though the discerning public should set it down afterwards as only a 'Heretic's Tragedy.'

Our friend Mr. Jarves came to read a part of your letter to us, confirmatory of doctrines he had heard from us on an earlier day. The idea of your writing the art criticisms of the 'Leader' (!) was so stupendously ludicrous, there was no need of faith in your loyalty to laugh the whole imputation, at first hearing, to uttermost scorn. I must say, in justice to Mr. Jarves, that he never did really believe one word of it, though a good deal ruffled and pained that it should have been believed by anybody. He is full of admiring and grateful feeling for you, and has gone on to Italy in that mind.

As for me, I almost yearn to go too. We have fallen into a pit here in Paris, upon evil days and rooms, an impulsive friend having taken an apartment for us facing the east, insufficiently protected, and with a bedroom wanting, so that we are still waiting, with trunks unpacked, and our child sleeping on the floor, till we can get emancipated anyhow. Then, through the last week's cold, I have not been well—only it will not, I think, be much, as I am better already, and there will be no practical end to the talk of Nice and Pau, which my husband had begun a little. All this has hindered me from following my first impulse of thanking you for your letter immediately.

How beautiful Paris is, and how I agree with you, as we both did with dear Miss Mitford, on the subject of Louis Napoleon. I approve of him *exactly because* I am a democrat, and not at all for an exceptional reason. I hold that the most democratical government in Europe is out and out the French Government (which doesn't exclude the absolutist element, far from it); but who in England understands this? and that the representative man of France, the

incarnate republic, is the man Louis Napoleon? An extraordinary man he is. I never was a Buonapartist, though the legend of the first Napoleon has wrung tears from me before now, and I was very sorry when Louis Napoleon was elected instead of Cavaignac. At the *coup d'état* I was not sorry. And since then I have believed in him more and more.

So far in sympathy. In regard to the slaves, no, no, no; I belong to a family of West Indian slaveholders, and if I believed in curses, I should be afraid. I can at least thank God that I am not an American. How you look serenely at slavery, I cannot understand, and I distrust your power to explain. Do you indeed?

Dear Mr. Ruskin, do let us hear from you sometimes. It is such a great gift, a letter of yours. Then remember that I am a spirit in prison all the winter, not able to stir out. Up to this time we have lived *perdus* from all our acquaintances because of our misfortunes. With my husband's cordial regards, I remain most truly yours always,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

The publishers are directed to send you the volumes on their publication.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 3 Rue du Colisée, Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
Saturday, December 17, 1855 [postmark].

How pleasant, dearest Mona Nina, to hear you, though the voice sounds far! Try and come back to us soon, and let us talk, or listen, rather, to your talking. Why shouldn't *I*, too, have a sister of charity, like others? I appeal to you.

Still, I have only good to tell you of myself. I am better through the better weather and through our arrival in this apartment, where, as Robert says, we are as pleased as if we had never lived in a house before. Well, I assure you

the rooms are perfect in comfort and convenience; not large, but *warm*, and of a number and arrangement which exclude all fault-finding. Clean, carpeted; no glitter, nothing very pretty — not even the clocks — but with sofas and chairs suited to lollers such as one of us, and altogether what I mean whenever I say that an 'apartment' on the Continent is twenty times more really 'comfortable' than any of your small houses in England. Robert has a room to himself too. It's perfect. I hop about from one side to the other, like a bird in a new cage. The feathers are draggled and rough, though. I am not strong, though the cough is quieter without the least doubt.

And this time also I shall not die, perhaps. Indeed, I do think not.

That darling Robert carried me into the carriage, swathed past possible breathing, over face and respirator in woollen shawls. No, he wouldn't set me down even to walk up the fiacre steps, but shoved me in upside down, in a struggling bundle — I struggling for breath — he accounting to the concierge for 'his murdered man' (rather woman) in a way which threw me into fits of laughter afterwards to remember! 'Elle se porte très bien! elle se porte extrêmement bien. Ce n'est rien que les poumons.' Nothing but lungs. No air in them, which was the worst! Think how the concierge must have wondered ever since about 'cet original d'Anglais,' and the peculiar way of treating wives when they are in excellent health. 'Sacre.'

Kind Madame Mohl was here to-day, asking about you; and the Aïdés, male and female, whom we did not see, being at dinner; and dear Lady Elgin came to the door in her wheel-chair.

We keep Penini (in a bed this time) in our bedroom. He was so pathetic about it, we would not lose him.

Write to us, keep writing to us, till you come. I think much of you, wish much for you, and feel much *with* you. May God bless you, my dear dear friend. The

frost broke up on Thursday, and it is raining warmly to-day; but I can't believe in the possibility of the cold penetrating much into this house under worse circumstances; and I shall be bold, and try hard to begin writing next week.

Oh! George Sand. How magnificent that eighteenth volume is; I mean the volume which concludes with the views upon the *sexes!* After all, and through all, if her hands are ever so defiled, that woman has a clean soul.

On the magnetic subjects, too, her 'je ne sais' is worthy of her. And yet, more is to be known, I am sure, than she knows.

I read this book so eagerly and earnestly that I seem to burn it up before me. Really there are great things in it.

And to hear people talking it over coldly, pulling it leaf from leaf!

Robert quite joins with me at last. He is intensely interested, and full of admiration.

Now do write. With our united love, we are ever yours, be certain!

R. B. and E. B. B.

Remember not to agree to do the etching. Pray be careful not to involve the precious eyes too much. How easy it would be to etch them out! Frightfully easy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Paris,] 3 Rue du Colisée:
Monday, January 29, 1856 [postmark].

Dearest Fanny, — I can't get over it that you should fancy I meant to 'banter' you.[1] If I wrote lightly, it was partly that *you* wrote lightly, and partly perhaps because at bottom I wasn't light at all. When one feels out of spirits, it's the most natural thing possible to be extravagantly gay; now, isn't it?

[1] This refers to a note from Mrs. Browning to Miss Haworth, inquiring whether it was true that she was engaged to be married.

And now believe me with what truth and earnestness of heart I am interested in all that concerns you; and this is every woman's chief concern, of course, this great fact of love and marriage. My advice is, be sure of him *first*, and of yourself *chiefly*. For the rest I would marry ('if I were a woman,' I was going to say), though the whole world spouted fire in my face. Marriage is a personal matter, be sure, and the nearest and wisest can't judge for you. If you can make up two hundred a year between you, or less even, there is no pecuniary obstacle in my eyes. People may live very cheaply and very happily if they are happy otherwise.

As for me, my only way was to cut the knot — because it was an untieable knot — and because my fingers generally are not strong at untying. What do you mean by Mr. Kenyon's backing me? Nobody backed me except the north wind which blew us vehemently out of England. Mr. Kenyon knew no more of the affair than you did, though he was very kind afterwards and took my part. And as to money, there was (and is) little enough. It was a case of pure madness (for people of the world), just like table-moving and spirit-rapping and the 'hands'!

But you, my dear friend, I do earnestly entreat you to consider if you are sure of principles, sentiment — and *of yourself*. Because, whether you know it or not, you are happily situated *now* as far as exterior circumstances are concerned. They are not worth much, but they have their worth. They give you liberty to follow your own devices, to think the beautiful and feel the noble; to live out, in short, your individual life, which it is so hard to do in marriage, even where you marry worthily.

I say this probably 'as one who beateth the air;' yet you *must* consider that I who say it, and who say it *emphatically*, consider a happy marriage as the happiest state, and that all pecuniary reasons against love are both ineffectual and *stupid*.

Flippancy, flippancy, of course. London would be better (for your friends) as a residence for you, than Wittemberg can be; and for that, and no other account, I could be sorry that you did not settle *so*.

Well, never mind! The description sounds excellently; almost over romantic, though. Is there steadiness, do you think, and depth, and reliableness altogether? What impression does he make among those who have known him longest? Dearest Fanny, do nothing in haste.

Now I am going to tell you something which has vexed me, and continues to vex me. The clock. If you knew Robert, you never would have asked him. He has a sort of mania about shops, and won't buy his own gloves. He bought a pair of boots the other day (because I went down on my knees to ask him, and the water was running in through his soles), and he will not soon get over it. Without exaggeration, he would rather leap down among the lions after your glove, as the knight of old, than walk into a shop for you. If I could but go out, there would be no difficulties; but I am shut up in my winter prison, in spite of the extraordinarily mild weather, through having suffered so much in the beginning of the winter. I asked Sarianna; she also shrinks from the responsibility; is afraid of not pleasing you, &c. The end of it all is that Mrs. Haworth will think us all very disobliging barbarians, and that really I am vexed. Why not ask Mrs. Cochrane to get the thing for you? You can but ask, at any rate.

I am very anxious just now about dear Mr. Kenyon, who has been alarmingly ill, and is only better, I fear. Miss Bayley wrote to tell me, and added that he was going to Cowes when he could move, which pleases me; for only change of air and liberation from London air can complete his convalescence.

For the rest, I am busy beyond description; but never too much so, mind, dear Fanny, to be glad to get your letters. Write soon. Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée: February 21, [1856].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I should have answered your note days ago! If you saw how I am in a plague of industry just now, and not a moment unspotted! — how, for instance, I kept an 'Examiner' newspaper (sent to us from London) three days on the table before I could read it, — you would make an allowance for me. It's a sort of *furia!* I must get over so much writing, or I shall be too late for the summer's printing. If it isn't done by June, what will become of me? I shall go back to Italy in disgrace, and considerably poorer than I need be, which is of more practical consequence. So I fag. Then there's an hour and a half in the morning for Penini's lessons. We breakfast at nine, and receive nobody till past four. This will all prove to you two things, dearest friend — first (I hope) that I'm pardonable for making you wait a few days longer than should have been, and secondly that I'm tolerably well. Yes, indeed. Since our arrival in this house, after just the first, when there was some frost, we have had such a miraculous mildness under the name of winter, that I rallied as a matter of course, and for the last month there has been no return of the spitting of blood, and no extravagance of cough. I have persisted with cod's liver oil, and I look by no means ill, people assure me, and so I may assure *you*. But I am not very strong, and was a good deal tired after a two hours' drive which I ventured on a week ago in the Bois de Boulogne. The small rooms, and deficiency of air resulting from them, make a long shutting up a more serious thing than I find it in Florence in our acres of apartment. But it is easy to mend strength when only strength is to be mended, and I, for one, get strong again easily. I only hope that the cold is not returning. The air was sharp yesterday and is to-day; but it's February,

and the spring is at the doors, and we may hope with reason. . . .

What do you say of the peace as a final peace? You are not at least vexed, as so many English are, that we can't fight a little for glory to reinstate our reputation. You'll excuse that. Still, I can't help feeling disappointed in the peace — chiefly, perhaps, because I hoped too much from the war. Will nothing be done after all for Italy? nothing for Poland?

You want books. Read About's 'Tolla.' He is a new writer, and his book is exquisite as a transcript of Italian manners. Then read Octave Feuillet. There is much in him.

Will there be war with America, dear Mr. Martin? Never will I believe it till I hear the cannons.

Talking of what we should believe, it appears that Mrs. Trollope has thrown over Hume[1] from some failure in his moral character in Florence. I have had many letters on the subject. I have no doubt that the young man, who is weak and vain, and was exposed to gross flatteries from the various unwise coteries at Florence who took him up, deserves to be thrown over. But his *mediumship* is undisproved, as far as I can understand. It is simply a physical faculty — he is quite an electric wire. At Florence everybody is quarrelling with everybody on the subject. I thought I would tell you.

Penini, the pet, is radiant, and learning French triumphantly. May God bless you! Write to me, dearest Mrs. Martin, and tell me of both of you. Robert's love.

Your ever, ever affectionate

BA.

[1] The notorious medium, prototype of Mr. Browning's 'Sludge.' He subsequently changed his name to Home.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée: February 28, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — Three letters, one on the top of another, and I don't answer. Shame on me. How I have thought of you, to make up! And you write to apologise to *us*, from a dreamy mystical apprehension that we may peradventure have lost eightpence on your account! Well, it would have been awful if we had. And so Providence interposed with a special miracle, and obliged the officials to accept the actual penny stamp for the fourpenny stamp you meant to put, and *we paid just nothing for the terrible letter!* Take heart, therefore, in future, before all hypothetical misfortunes. That's the moral of the tale. . . .

My dear friend, how shall I pull you and make you come to Paris? Madame de Triqueti was here the other day, and spoke of you, and swore she wouldn't help to take rooms for you, unless you came near *her*. As to the two rooms you speak of, I am sure you might have what rooms you pleased now, in this neighbourhood. What would you give? Our present apartment is comfort itself, and except some cold days a short time after you went away, we have really had no winter. The miraculous warmth has saved me, for I was so *felled* in that Rue de Grenelle, I should scarcely have had force against an ordinary cold season. Little Penini has been blossoming like a rose all the time. Such a darling, idle, distracted child he is, not keeping his attention for three minutes together for the hour and a half I teach him, and when I upbraid him for it, throwing himself upon me like a dog, kissing my cheeks and head and hands. 'O you little pet, *dive* me one chance more! I will really be dood,' and learning everything by magnetism, getting on in seven weeks, for instance, to read French quite surprisingly. He has written a poem on the war and the peace, called 'Soldiers going and coming'

which Robert and I thought so remarkable that I sent it to Mr. Forster. Oh, such a darling, that child is! I expect the wings to grow presently.

As for my poem (far below Penini's), I work on steadily and have put in order and transcribed five books, containing in all above six thousand lines ready for the press. I have another book to put together and transcribe, and then must begin the composition part of one or two more books, I suppose. I must be ready for printing by the time we go to England, in June. Robert too is much occupied with 'Sordello,'[1] and we neither of us receive anybody till past four o'clock. I mean that when you have read my new book, you put away all my other poems or most of them, and know me only by the new. Oh, I am so anxious to make it good. I have put much of myself in it — I mean to say, of my soul, my thoughts, emotions, opinions; in other respects, there is not a personal line, of course. It's a sort of poetic art-novel. If it's a failure, there will be the comfort of having made a worthy effort, of having done it as well as I could. Write soon to me, and love us both constantly, as we do you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] May 2, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — It's very pleasant always to get letters from you, and such kind dear letters, showing that you haven't broken the tether-strings in search of 'pastures new,' weary of our cropped grass.

As for news, you have most of the persons upon whom you care for gossip in your hand now — Mrs. Sartoris, Madame Viardot, Lady Monson, and the Ristori herself. Robert went to see her twice, because Lady Monson led

[1] An attempted revision of the poem, subsequently abandoned, as explained in the preface addressed to M. Milsand in 1863.

him by the hand kindly, and was charmed; thought the Medée very fine, but won't join in the cry about miraculous genius and Rachel out-Racheled. He thinks that as far as the highest and largest development of sensibility can go, she is very great; but that for those grand and sudden *aperçus* which have distinguished actors — such as Kean, for instance — he does not acknowledge them in her. You have heard perhaps how Dickens and others, Macready among the rest, depreciated her. Dickens went so far as to say, I understand, that no English audience would tolerate her defects; which will be put to the proof presently. By the way, you had better not quote Macready on this subject, as he expressed himself unwilling to be quoted on it. . . .

So now we are well again,[1] thank God; and if Robert will but take regular exercise, he will keep so, I hope. As to Penini, he is radiant, and even I have been out walking twice, though a good deal weaker for the winter. More open air, and much more, is necessary to set me growing again, but I shall grow; and meantime I have been working, and am working, at so close a rate that if I lose a day I am lost, which is too close a rate, and makes one feel rather nervous. We see nobody till after four meantime. I have finished (not transcribed) the last book but one, and am now in the very last book, which must be finished with the last days of May. Then the first fortnight of June will be occupied with the transcription of these two last books, and I shall carry the completed work with me to England on the 16th if it please God. Oh, I do hope you won't be disappointed with it — much! Some things you will like certainly, because of the boldness and veracity of them, and others you *may;* I can't be so sure. Robert speaks well of the poetry — encourages me much. But then he has seen only six of the eight books yet.

[1] Mr. Browning and the boy had been suffering from sore throats.

He just now has taken to drawing, and after thirteen days' application has produced some quite startling copies of heads. I am very glad. He can't rest from serious work in light literature, as I can; it wearies him, and there are hours which are on his hands, which is bad both for them and for him. The secret of life is in full occupation, isn't it? This world is not tenable on other terms. So while I lie on the sofa and rest in a novel, Robert has a resource in his drawing; and really, with all his feeling and knowledge of art, some of the mechanical trick of it can't be out of place.

To-night he is going to Madame Mohl, who is well and as vivacious as ever. When Monckton Milnes was in Paris he dined with him in company with Mignet, Cavour, George Sand, and an empty chair in which Lamartine was expected to sit. George Sand had an ivy wreath round her head, and looked like herself. But Lady Monson will talk to you of *her*, better than I can. Now, mind you ask Lady Monson.

As to this Government, I only entreat you *not* to believe any of the mendacious reports set afloat here by a most unworthy Opposition, and carried out by the English 'Athenæum' and other prints. Surely a cause must be bad which is supported by such bad means. In the first place, Béranger did *not* write the verses attributed to him. The internal evidence was sufficient — for Victor Hugo is his personal enemy — to say nothing of the poetry. Then it would be wise, I think, in considering this question, and in taking for granted that the 'literature and talent' of the country are against the Government, to analyse the antecedents and character of the persons who *do* stand out, persons implicated in former Governments, or favoured by former Governments, and whose vanity and prejudices are necessarily contrary to a new order. These persons, either in themselves or their friends, have all been tried in action and found wanting. They have all lost the confidence of

the French people, either by their misconduct or their ill-fortune. They are all cast aside as broken instruments. Under these circumstances they think it desirable to break themselves into the lock, to prevent the turning of another key; they consider it noble and patriotic to stand aside and revile and throw mud, in order to hinder the action of those who *are* acting for the country. In my mind, it is quite otherwise; in my mind and in many other minds — Robert's, for instance! and he began with a most intense hatred of this Government, as you well know. But he does not shut his eyes to all that is noble and admirable going on, on all sides. At last he is sick of the Opposition, he admits. In respect to literature, nothing can be more mendacious than to say there are restraints upon literature. Books of freer opinion are printed now than would ever have been permitted under Louis Philippe, as was reproached against Napoleon by an enemy the other day — books of free opinion, even licentious opinion, on religion and philosophy. *There is restraint in the newspapers only.* That the 'Athenæum' should venture to say that in consequence of the suppression of books compositors are thrown out of work and forced to become transcribers of verses like Béranger's (which are not Béranger's) is so stupendous a falsehood in the face of *statistics which prove a yearly increase in the amount of books printed* that I quite lose my breath, you see, in speaking of it.

The Government is steadily solving, or attempting to solve, that difficult modern problem of possible *Socialism* which has been knocking at all our heads and hearts so long. *That* is its vexation. It is a Government for the *'bus people*, the first settled and serious Government that ever attempted *their* case. Its action is worth all the pedantry of the *doctrinaires* and the middling morals of the *juste milieu;* and I, who am a Democrat, will stand by it as long as I can stand, which isn't very long just now, as I told you.

Dearest Mona Nina, I am so uneasy about dear Mr.

Kenyon, who has been ill again — *is* ill, I fear. He is in London — more's the pity! and Miss Bayley is with him. He gives me sad thoughts.

Do write of yourself. Don't *you* be sad, dearest friend. Oh, I do wish you could have come, and let us love you and talk to you — but on the 16th of June, at any rate.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] Monday, May 6, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — Your letter makes me feel very uncomfortable. We are in real difficulty about our dear friend Mr. Kenyon, the impulse being, of course, that Robert should go at once, and then the fear coming that it might be an annoyance, an intrusion, something the farthest from what it should be at all. If you had been more explicit — *you* — and we could know what was in your mind when you 'ask' Robert to come, my dear friend, then it would be all easier. If we could but know whether anything passed between you and Miss Bayley on this subject, or whether it is entirely out of your own head that you wish Robert to come. I thought about it yesterday, till I went to bed at eight o'clock with headache. Shall I tell you something in your ear? It is easier for a rich man to enter, after all, into the kingdom of heaven than into the full advantages of real human tenderness. Robert would give much at this moment to be allowed to go to dearest Mr. Kenyon, sit up with him, hold his hand, speak a good loving word to him. This would be privilege to him and to me; and love and gratitude on our parts justified us in *asking* to be allowed to do it. Twice we have asked. The first time a very kind but decided negative was returned to us on the part of our friend. Yesterday we again asked. Yesterday I wrote to say that it would be *consolation* to us if Robert might go — if we might say so without 'teasing.' To-morrow, in the case of Miss

Bayley sending a consent, even on her own part, Robert will set off instantly; but without an encouraging word from her — my dear friend, do you not see that it might really vex dearest Mr. Kenyon? Observe, we have no more right of intruding than you would have if you forced your way upstairs. It's a wretched world, where we can't express an honest affection honestly without half appearing indelicate to ourselves; nothing proves more how the dirt of the world is up to our chins, and I think I had my headache yesterday really and absolutely from simple disgust.

You see, Robert might go to stay till Mr. Edward Kenyon arrives — if it were only till then. I still hope and pray that our dearest friend may rally, to recover at least a tolerable degree of health. He has certain good symptoms; and some of the bad ones, such as the wandering, &c., are constitutional with him under the least fever. You may suppose what painful anxiety we are in about him. Oh, he has been always so good to me — so true, sympathising, and generous a friend!

I shall always have a peculiar feeling to that dear kind Miss Bayley for what she has been to him these latter months.

Now I can't write any more just now. Leighton has been cut up unmercifully by the critics, but bears on, Robert says, not without courage. That you should say 'his picture looked well' was comfort in the general gloom, though even you don't give anything yet that can be called an opinion. Mrs. Sartoris will be much vexed by it all, I am sure.

May God bless you! Write to me. Robert's love with that of

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Did you observe a portrait of Robert by Page? Where have they hung it, and how does it strike you?

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée:
Saturday, June 17, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — I was just going to write to you to beg you to apply to Chapman for Robert's book, when he came to stop me with the newspaper. Thank you, my dearest Fanny, for having thought of me when you had so much weary thought; it was very touching to me that you should. And I am vexed to have missed two days before I told you this — the first by an accident, and the second (to-day) by its being a blank post-day; but you will know by your heart how deeply I have felt and feel for you. May God bless you and love you! If I were as He to comfort, you should be strong and calm at this moment. But what are we to one another in this world? How weak, how far, we all feel in moments like these.

Still, I should like to know that you had some friend near you, to hold your hand and look in your face and be silent, as those are silent who know and feel. When you can write again, tell me how it is with you in this respect, and in others.

So sudden, so sudden! Yet bereavements like these are always sudden to the soul, more or less. All *blows* must needs be sudden. May your health not suffer, dear Fanny. We shall be in London in about a week after the 16th, for we are delayed through my not having finished my poem, which nobody will finish reading perhaps. We go to Mr. Kenyon's house in Devonshire Place, kindly offered to us for the summer. Shall we find you, I wonder, in London?

Yes; there are terrible costs in this world. We get knowledge by losing what we hoped for, and liberty by losing what we loved. But this world is a fragment — or, rather, a segment — and it will be rounded presently, to the completer

satisfaction. Not to doubt *that* is the greatest blessing it gives now. Death is as vain as life; the common impression of it, as false and as absurd. A mere change of circumstances. What more? And how near these spirits are, how conscious, how full of active energy and tender reminiscence and interest, who shall dare to doubt? For myself, I do not doubt at all. If I did, I should be sitting here inexpressibly sad — for myself, not you. . . .

Robert unites with me in affectionate sympathy, and Sarianna was here last night, talking feelingly about you. You shall have Robert's book when we get to England. Think how much I think of you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

Mr. Kenyon has been very ill, and is still in a state occasioning anxiety. He is at the Isle of Wight.

At the end of June the Brownings came back to London, for what was, as it proved, Mrs. Browning's last visit to England. Mr. Kenyon had lent them his house in London, at 39 Devonshire Place, he himself being in the Isle of Wight; but a shadow was thrown over the whole of this visit by the serious and ultimately fatal illness of this dear friend. It was partly in order to see him, and partly because Miss Arabel Barrett had been sent out of town by her father almost as soon as her sister reached Devonshire Place, that about the beginning of September they made an expedition to the Isle of Wight, staying first at Ventnor with Miss Barrett, and subsequently at West Cowes with Mr. Kenyon. All the while Mrs. Browning was actively engaged in seeing 'Aurora Leigh' through the press, and the poem was published just about the time they left England. The letters during this visit are few and mostly unimportant, but the following are of interest.

To Mrs. Jameson

39 Devonshire Place:
Friday morning [July–August 1856].

My dearest Mona Nina, my dear friend, — I am so grieved, so humiliated. If it is possible to forgive me, do.

I received your note, delayed answering it because I fancied Robert might *learn* to accept your kindness about the box after a day's consideration, and so forgot everything bodily, taking one day for another, as is my way lately, in this great crush of too much to do and think of. When I was persuaded to go yesterday morning for the first and last time to the Royal Academy, on the point of closing, I went in like an idiot — that is, an innocent — never once thinking of what I was running the risk of losing; and when I returned and found you gone, you were lost and I in despair. So much in despair that I did not hope once you might come again, and out I went after dinner to see the Edward Kenyons in Beaumont Street, like an innocent — that is, an idiot — and so lost you again. You may forgive me — it is possible — but to forgive myself! it is more difficult. Try not quite to give me up for it. Your note gave me so much pleasure. I *wished* so to see you! For the future I mean to write down engagements in a text-hand, and set them up somewhere in sight; but if I broke through twenty others as shamefully, it would not be with as much real grief to myself as in this fault to my dearest Mona Nina. Do come soon, out of mercy — and magnanimity!

Your *ever* affectionate
BA.

To Mrs. Martin

3 Parade, West Cowes:
September 9, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Your letter has followed us. We have been in the south of the island, at Ventnor, with

Arabel, and are now in the north with Mr. Kenyon. We came off from London at a day's notice, the Wimpole Street people being sent away abruptly (in consequence, plainly, of our arrival becoming known), and Arabel bringing her praying eyes to bear on Robert, who agreed to go with her and stay for a fortnight. So we have had a happy sorrowful two weeks together, between meeting and parting; and then came here, where our invalid friend called us. Poor Arabel is in low spirits — very — and *aggrieved* with being sent away from town; but the fresh air and *repose* will do her good, in spite of herself, though she swears they won't (in the tone of saying they shan't). She is not by any means strong, and overworks herself in London with schools and Refuges, and societies — does the work of a horse, and *isn't* a horse. Last winter she was quite unwell, as you heard. In spite of which, I did not think her looking ill when I saw her first; and now she looks well, I think — quite as well as she ever does. But she wants a new moral atmosphere — a little society. She is thrown too entirely on her own resources, and her own resources are of somewhat a gloomy character. This is all wrong. It has been partly necessary and a little her fault, at one time. I would give my right hand to take her to Italy; but if I gave right and left, it would not be found possible. My father has remained in London, and may not go to Ventnor for the next week or two, says a letter from Arabel this morning. . . . The very day he heard of our being in Devonshire Place he gave orders that his family should go away. I wrote afterwards, but my letter, as usual, remained unnoticed.

It has naturally begun to dawn upon my child that I have done something very wicked to make my father what he is. Once he came up to me earnestly and said, 'Mama, if you've been very, very naughty — if you've *broken china!*' (his idea of the heinous in crime) — 'I advise you to go into the room and say, "*Papa, I'll be dood.*"' Almost I obeyed the inspiration — almost I felt inclined to go. But there

were considerations — yes, good reasons — which kept me back, and must continue to do so. In fact, the position is perfectly hopeless — perfectly.

We find our dear friend Mr. Kenyon better in some respects than we expected, but I fear in a very precarious state. Our stay is uncertain. We may go at a moment's notice, or remain if he wishes it; and, my proofs being sent post by post, we are able to see to them together, without too much delay. Still, only one-half of the book is done, and the days come when I shall find no pleasure in them — nothing but coughing.

George and my brothers were very kind to Robert at Ventnor, and he is quite touched by it. Also, little Pen made his way into the heart of 'mine untles,' and was carried on their backs up and down hills, and taught the ways of 'English boys,' with so much success that he makes pretensions to 'pluck,' and has left a good reputation behind him. On one occasion he went up to a boy of twelve who took liberties, and exclaimed, 'Don't be impertinent, sir' (doubling his small fist), 'or I will show you that *I'm a boy*.' Of course 'mine untles' are charmed with this 'proper spirit,' and applaud highly. Robert and I begged to suggest to the hero that the 'boy of twelve' might have killed him if he had pleased. 'Never mind,' cried little Pen, 'there would have been somebody to think of *me*, who would have him hanged' (great applause from the uncles). 'But *you* would still be dead,' said Robert remorselessly. 'Well, I don't tare for *that*. It was a beautiful place to die in — close to the sea.'

So you will please to observe that, in spite of being Italians and wearing curls, we can fight to the death on occasion. . . .

Write to me, and say how you both are. Robert's love. We both love you.

Very lovingly yours,

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[West Cowes:] September 13, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert comes suddenly down on me with news that he is going to write to you, so, though I have been writing letters all the morning, I must throw in a few words. As to keeping Penini at the sea longer, he will have been three weeks at the sea to-morrow, and you must remember how late into the year it is getting — and we with so much work before us! And if Peni recovered his roses at Ventnor, I recovered my cough (from the piercing east winds); but I am better since, and last night slept well. It's far too early for cough, however, in any shape. We have heaps of business to do in London — heaps — and the book is only half-done. Still, we are asked to stay here till three days after Madame Braun's arrival, and it isn't fixed yet when she will arrive; so that I dare say Peni will have a full month of the sea, after all. Then I have a design upon Robert's good-nature, of persuading him to *go round by Taunton* to London (something like going round the earth to Paris), that I may see my poor forsaken sister Henrietta, who wants us to give her a week in her cottage, pathetically bewailing herself that she has no means for the expense of going to London this time — that she has done it twice for me, and can't this time (the purse being low); and unless we go to her, she must do without seeing me, in spite of a separation of four years. So I am anxious to go, of course.

Robert will have told you of our dear friend here. We began by finding him much better than we expected, but gradually the sad truth deepens that he is very ill — oh, it deepens and saddens at once. The face lights up with the warm, generous heart; then the fire drops, and you see the embers. The breath is very difficult — it is hard to live. He leans on the table, saying softly and pathetically 'My God! my God!' Now and then he desires aloud to pass away

and be at rest. I cannot tell you what his kindness is — his consideration is too affecting; kinder he is than ever. Miss Bayley is an excellent nurse — at once gentle and decided — and, if she did but look further than this life and this death, she would be a perfect companion for him. Peni creeps about like a mouse; but he goes out, and he isn't over-tired, as he was at Ventnor. We think he is altogether better in looks and ways.

Your affectionate

BA.

A short visit to Taunton seems to have been made about the end of September, as anticipated in the last letter, and then, at some time in the course of October, they set out for Florence. But Mrs. Browning, in thus quitting England for the last time, left behind her as a legacy the completed volume of 'Aurora Leigh.' This poem was the realisation of her early scheme, which goes back at least to the year 1844, of writing a novel in verse — a novel modern in setting and ideas, and embodying her own ideals of social and moral progress. And to a large extent she succeeded. As a vehicle of her opinions, the scheme and style of the poem proved completely adequate. She moves easily through the story; she handles her metre with freedom and command; she can say her say without exaggeration or unnatural strain. Further, the opinions themselves, as those who have learnt to know her through her letters will feel sure, are lofty and honourable, and full of a genuine enthusiasm for humanity. As a novel, 'Aurora Leigh' may be open to the criticism that most of the characters fail to impress us with a sense of reality and vitality, and that the hero hardly wins the sympathy from the reader which he is meant to win. But as a poem it is unquestionably a very remarkable work — not so full of permanent poetic spirit as the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' not so readily popular as 'The Cry of the Children' or 'Cowper's Grave' — but a highly character-

istic work of one whose character was made up of pure thoughts and noble ideals, which, in spite of the inevitable change of manners and social interests with the lapse of years, will retain into an indefinite future a very considerable intrinsic value as poetry, and a very high rank among the works of its author.

At the time of its publication its success was immediate. The subjects touched on were largely such as always attract interest, because they are open to much controversy; and the freshness of style and originality of conception (for almost the only other novel-poem in the language is 'Don Juan,' which can hardly be regarded as of the same type as 'Aurora Leigh') attracted a multitude of readers. A second edition was required in a fortnight, a third in a few months — a success which must have greatly pleased the authoress, who had put her inmost self into her work, and had laboured hard to leave behind her an adequate representation of her poetic art.

This natural satisfaction was darkened, however, by the death, on December 3, of Mr. Kenyon, in whose house the poem had been completed, and to whom it had been dedicated. Readers of these letters do not require to be told how near and dear a friend he had been to both Mrs. Browning and her husband. During his life his friendship had taken the practical form of allowing them 100*l.* a year, in order that they might be more free to follow their art for its own sake only, and in his will he left 6,500*l.* to Robert Browning and 4,500*l.* to Mrs. Browning. These were the largest legacies in a very generous will — the fitting end to a life passed in acts of generosity and kindness to those in need.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: November 1856.]

Robert says he will wait for me till to-morrow, but I leave my other letters rather and write to you, so sure I

am that we oughtn't to put that off any longer. Dearest Sarianna, I am very much pleased that you like the poem, having feared a little that you might not. M. Milsand will *not*, I prophesy; 'seeing as from a tower the end of all.' The 'Athenæum' is right in supposing that it will be much liked *and* much disliked by people in general, although the press is so far astonishing in its goodwill, and although the extravagance of private letters might well surprise the warmest of my friends. But, patience! In a little while we shall have the other side of the question, and the whips will fall fast after the nosegays. Still, I am surprised, I own, at the amount of success; and that golden-hearted Robert is in ecstasies about it — far more than if it all related to a book of his own. The form of the story, and also something in the philosophy, seem to have caught the crowd. As to the poetry by itself, anything good in *that* repels rather. I am not as blind as Romney, not to perceive this. He had to be blinded, observe, to be made to see; just as Marian had to be dragged through the uttermost debasement of circumstances to arrive at the sentiment of personal dignity. I am sorry, but indeed it seemed necessary.

You tantalise me with your account of 'warm days.' It is warmer with us to-day, but we have had snow on all the mountains, and poor Isa has been half-frozen at her villa. As for me, I have suffered wonderfully little — no more than discomfort and languor. We have piled up the wood in this room and the next, and had a perpetual blaze. Not for ten years has there been in Florence such a November! 'Is this Italy?' says poor Fanny Haworth's wondering face. Still, she likes Florence better than she did. . . .

Is it not strange that dear Mr. Kenyon should have lost his brother by this sudden stroke? Strange and sad? . . . He was suffering too under a relapse when the news came — which, Miss Bayley says, did not dangerously affect him, after all.

Oh, sad and strange! I pity the unfortunate wife more than anyone. She said to me this summer, 'I could not live without him. Let us hope in God that he and I may die at the same moment.' . . .

There's much good in dear M. Milsand's idea for us about Paris and the South of France. Still, I'm rather glad to be quite outside the world for a little, during these first steps of 'Aurora.' Best love to the dear Nonno. May God bless you both!

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Oh, the spirits! Hate of Hume and belief in the facts are universal here.

To Miss I. Blagden

[About December 1856.]

My dearest Isa,—Just before your note came I had the pleasure of burning my own to you yesterday, which was not called for, as I expected. You would have seen from *that*, that Robert was going to you of his own accord and mine. . . .

I am rather glad you have not seen the 'Athenæum;' the analysis it gives of my poem is so very unfair and partial. You would say the conception was really *null*. It does not console me at all that I should be praised and over-praised, the idea given of the poem remaining so absolutely futile. Even the outside shell of the plan is but half given, and the double action of the metaphysical intention entirely ignored. I protest against it. Still, Robert thinks the article not likely to do harm. Perhaps not. Only one hates to be misrepresented.

So glad I am that Robert was good last night. He told me he had been defending Swedenborg and the spirits, which suggested to me some notion of superhuman virtue on his part. Yes; love him. He is my right 'glory;' and the

'lute and harp' would go for nothing beside him, even if 'Athenæums' spelled one out properly.

Dearest Isa, may God bless you! Let me hear by a word, when Ansuno passes, how you are. Your loving

E. B. B.

The following letter was written almost immediately after the receipt of the news of Mr. Kenyon's death. Mrs. Kinney, to whom it is addressed, was the wife of the Hon. William Burnett Kinney, who was United States Minister at the Court of Sardinia in 1851. After his term of office he removed to Florence, for the purpose of producing a historical work, but he did not live to accomplish it. Mrs. Kinney, who was herself a poet, was also the mother of the well-known American poet and critic, Mr. E. C. Stedman.[1]

To Mrs. W. B. Kinney

Casa Guidi: Friday evening [December 1856].

Your generous sympathy, my dear Mrs. Kinney, would have made me glad yesterday, if I had not been so very, very sad with some news of the day before, telling me of the loss of the loved friend to whom that book is dedicated. So sad I was that I could not lift up my head to write and express to you how gratefully I felt the recognition of your letter. You are most generous—overflowingly generous. If I said I wished to deserve it better, it would be like wishing you less generous; so I won't. I will only thank you from my heart; *that* shall be all I shall say.

Affectionately yours always,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

[1] For the substance of this information I am indebted to Mr. Charles Aldrich, to whom the letter was presented by Mrs. Kinney, and through whose kindness it is here printed. The original now forms part of the Aldrich collection in the Historical Department of Iowa, U.S.A.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: December 26, 1856 [postmark].

My ever dear Friend, — To have three letters from you all unanswered seems really to discredit me to myself, while it gives such proof of your kindness and affection. No other excuse is to be offered but the sort of interruption which sadness gives. I really had not the heart to sit down and talk of my 'Aurora,' even in reference to the pleasure and honour brought to me by the expression of your opinion, when the beloved friend associated with the poor book was lost to me in this world, gone where perhaps he no longer sympathises with pleasure or honour of mine, now — for nearly the first time. *Perhaps*. After such separations the sense of *distance* is the thing felt first. And certainly my book at least is naturally saddened to me, and the success of it wholesomely spoiled.

Yet your letter, my dearest Mona Nina, arrived in time to give me great, great pleasure — true pleasure indeed, and most tenderly do I thank you for it. I have had many of such letters from persons loved less, and whose opinions had less weight; and you will like to hear that in a fortnight after publication Chapman had to go to press with the second edition. In fact, the kind of reception given to the book has much surprised me, as I was prepared for an outcry of quite another kind, and extravagances in a quite opposite sense. This has been left, however, to the 'Press,' the 'Post,' and the 'Tablet,' who calls 'Aurora' 'a brazen-faced woman,' and brands the story as a romance in the manner of Frederic Soulié — in reference, of course, to its gross indecency.

I can't leave this subject without noticing (by the way) what you say of the likeness to the catastrophe of 'Jane Eyre.' I have sent to the library here for 'Jane Eyre' (but haven't got it yet) in order to refresh my memory on this

point; but, as far as I do recall the facts, the hero was monstrously disfigured and blinded in a fire the particulars of which escape me, and the circumstance of his being hideously scarred is the thing impressed chiefly on the reader's mind; certainly it remains innermost in mine. Now if you read over again those pages of my poem, you will find that the only injury received by Romney in the fire was from a blow and from the emotion produced by the *circumstances* of the fire. Not only did he *not* lose his eyes in the fire, but he describes the ruin of his house as no blind man could. He was standing there, a spectator. Afterwards he had a fever, and the eyes, the visual nerve, perished, showing no external stain — perished as Milton's did. I believe that a great shock on the nerves might produce such an effect in certain constitutions, and the reader on referring as far back as Marian's letter (when she avoided the marriage) may observe that his eyes had never been strong, that her desire had been to read his notes at night, and save them. For it was necessary, I thought, to the bringing-out of my thought, that Romney should be mulcted in his natural sight. The 'Examiner' saw that. Tell me if, on looking into the book again, you modify your feeling at all.

Dearest Mona Nina, you are well now, are you not? Your last dear letter seems brighter altogether, and seems to promise, too, that quiet in Italy will restore the tone of your spirits and health. Do you know, I almost advise you (though it is like speaking against my heart) to go from Marseilles to Rome straight, and to give us the spring. The spring is beautiful in Florence; and then I should be free to go and see the pictures with you, and enjoy you in the in-door and out-of-door way, both. . . .

You will have heard (we heard it only three days ago) how our kindest friend, who never forgot us, remembered us in his will. The legacy is eleven thousand pounds; six thousand five hundred of which are left to Robert, marking

delicately a sense of trust for which I am especially grateful. Of course, this addition to our income will free us from the pressure which has been upon us hitherto. But oh, how much sadness goes to making every gain in this world! It has been a sad, sad Christmas to me. A great gap is left among friends, and the void catches the eyes of the soul, whichever way it turns. He has been to me in much what my father might have been, and now the place is empty twice over.

You are yet *unconvinced.* You will be convinced one day, I think. Here are wide-awake men (some of them most anti-spiritual to this hour, as to theory) who agree in giving testimony to facts of one order. You shall hear their testimony when you come. As to the 'supernatural,' if you mean by that the miraculous, the suspension of natural law, I certainly believe in it no more than you do. What happens, happens according to a natural law, the development of which only becomes fuller and more observable. The movement, such as it is, is accelerated, and the whole structure of society in America is becoming affected more or less for good or evil, and very often for evil, through the extreme tenacity or slowness of those who ought to be leaders in every revolution of thought, but who, on this subject, are pleased to leave their places to the unqualified and the fanatical. Wise men will be sorry presently. When Faraday was asked to go and see Hume, to see a heavy table lifted without the touch of a finger, he answered that 'he had not time.' Time has its 'revenges.'

I am very glad that dear Mr. Procter has had some of these last benefits of one beloved by so many. What a loss, what a loss! Was there no bequest to yourself? We have heard scarcely anything.

May God bless you, dearest Mona Nina, with the blessing of years old and new.

Robert's love. Your ever attached

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: December 29, 1856.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am very, very sorry. I feel for you to the bottom of my heart. But she was a pure spirit, leaning out the way God had marked for her to go, and you had not associated this world too much with her, as if she could have been meant to stay long in it. Always you felt that she was about to go — did you not, dear friend? — and so that she does not stay cannot be an astonishment to you. The pain is the same; only it can't be the bitter, unnatural pain of certain separations. Her sweetness has gone to the sweet, her lovely nature to the lovely; no violence was done to her in carrying her home. May God enable you to dwell on this till you are satisfied — glad, and not sorry. That the spirits do not go far, and that they love us still, has grown to me surer and surer. And yet, how death shakes us!

Yes indeed. I, too, have been very, very sad. This Christmas has come to me like a cloud. I can scarcely fancy England without that bright face and sympathetic hand, that princely nature, in which you might put your trust more reasonably than in princes. These ten years back he has stood to me almost in my father's place; and now the place is empty — doubly. Since the birth of my child (seven years since) he has allowed us — rather, insisted on our accepting (for my husband was loth) — a hundred a year, and without it we should have often been in hard straits. His last act was to leave us eleven thousand pounds; and I do not doubt but that, if he had not known our preference of a simple mode of life and a freedom from worldly responsibilities (born artists as we both are), the bequest would have been greater still. As it is, we shall be relieved from pecuniary pressure, and your affectionateness will be glad to hear this, but I shall have more comfort from the

consideration of it presently than I can at this instant, when the loss, the empty chair, the silent voice, the apparently suspended sympathy, must still keep painfully uppermost.

You will wonder at a paragraph from the 'Athenæum,' which Robert thought out of taste until he came to understand the motive of it — that there had been (two days previous to its appearance) a brutal attack on the *will*, to the effect that literary persons had been altogether overlooked in the dispositions of the testator, in consequence of his being a disappointed literary pretender himself. Therefore we were brought forward, you see, together with Barry Cornwall and Dr. Southey, producing a wrong impression on the other side — only I can't blame the 'Athenæum' writer for it; nor can anyone, I think. The effect, however, to ourselves is most uncomfortable, as we are overwhelmed with 'congratulations' on all sides, just as if we had not lost a dear, tender, faithful friend and relative — just as if, in fact, some stranger had made us a bequest as a tribute to our poetry. People are so obtuse in this world — as Robert says, so '*dense*'; as Lord Brougham says, so '*crass*.'

Whatever may be your liking or disliking of 'Aurora Leigh,' you will like to hear that it's a great success, and in a way which I the least expected, for a fortnight after the day of publication it had to go to press for the second edition. The extravagances written to me about that book would make you laugh, if you were in a laughing mood; and the strange thing is that the press, the daily and weekly press, upon which I calculated for furious abuse, has been, for the most part, furious the other way. The 'Press' newspaper, the 'Post,' and the 'Tablet' are exceptions; but for the rest, the 'Athenæum' is the coldest in praising. It's a puzzle to me, altogether. I don't know upon what principle the public likes and dislikes poems. Any way, it is very satisfactory at the end of a laborious work (for much hard working and hard thinking have gone to it) to hear it thus

recognised, however I must think, with some bitterness, that the beloved and sympathetic friend to whom it was dedicated scarcely lived to know what would have given him so much pleasure as this.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, mind you tell me the truth exactly. I should like much to have pleased you and Mr. Martin, but I like the truth *best* of all from you. . . .

Dearest friends, keep kind thoughts of

Your affectionate

BA.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: January 1857.]

My dearest Sarianna, — A great many happy years to you, and also to the dear Nonno. I am glad, for my part, to be out of the last, which has been gloomy and almost embittering to me personally; but we must throw our burdens behind our backs as far as possible, and be cheerful for the rest of the road. If Robert alone wrote about 'Aurora,' I won't leave it to him to be alone grateful to dear M. Milsand for his extraordinary kindness. Do tell him, with my love, that I could not have expected it, even from himself — which is saying much. Most thankfully I leave everything to his discretion and judgment. On this subject I have been, from the beginning, divided between my strong desire of being translated and my strong fear of being ill-translated. Harrison Ainsworth's novels are quite one thing, and a poem of mine quite another. Oh yes! and yet, so great is my faith in Milsand, that the touch of his hand and the overseership of his eyes must tranquillise me. I am simply grateful.

Peni has been overwhelmed with gifts this year. I gave him on Christmas Day (by his own secret inspiration) 'a sword with a blade to dazzle the eyes;' Robert, a box of tools and carpenter's bench; and we united in a 'Robinson Crusoe,' who was well received. Then from others he had

sleeve-studs, a silver pencil-case, books, &c. According to his own magniloquent phrase, he was '*exceptionally* happy.' He has taken to long words; I heard him talking of '*evidences*' the other day. Poor little Pen! it's the more funny that he has by no means yet left off certain of his babyisms of articulation, and the combined effects are curious. You asked of Ferdinando.[1] Peni's attachment for Ferdinando is undiminished. Ferdinando can't be found fault with, even in gentleness, without a burst of tears on Peni's part. Lately I ventured to ask not to be left quite alone in the house on certain occasions; and though I spoke quite kindly, there was Peni in tears, assuring me that we ought to have another servant to open the door, for that 'poor Ferdinando had a great deal too much work'! When I ventured to demur to that, the next charge was, 'plainly I did not love Ferdinando as much as I loved Penini,' which I could not deny; and then with passionate sobs Peni said that 'I was very unjust indeed.' 'Indeed, indeed, dear mama, you *are* unjust! Ferdinando does everything for you, and I do nothing, except tease you, and even' (sobbing) 'I am sometimes a very naughty boy.' I had to mop up his tears with my pocket-handkerchief, and excuse myself as well as I could from the moral imputation of loving Peni better than Ferdinando.

We have been very glad in a visit from Frederick Tennyson. . . . God bless you! Robert won't wait.

Your ever attached

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: February 2, 1857 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — To begin (lest I forget before the ending), don't mind the sugar-tongs, if you have not actually bought them, inasmuch as, to my astonishment,

[1] The husband of Wilson, Mrs. Browning's maid.

Wilson has found a pair in Florence, marking the progress of civilisation in this South. In Paris last winter we sought in vain. There was nothing between one's fingers and real silver — too expensive for poets. But now we are supplied splendidly — and at the cost of five pauls, let me tell you.

Always delighted I am to have your letters, even when you don't tell me as touchingly as in this that mine are something to you. Do I not indeed love you and *sympathise* with you fully and deeply? Yes, indeed. On one subject I am afraid to touch. But I *know* why it is you feel so long, so unduly — so morbidly, in a sense. People in general, knowing themselves to be innocently made to suffer, would take comfort in righteous indignation and justified contempt: but to you the indignation and contempt would be the worst part of suffering; you can't bear it, and you are in a strait between the two. In fact it relieves you rather to take part against yourself, and to conclude on the whole that there's something really bad in your calling on the pure Heavens for vengeance. Yes, that's *you*. You sympathise tenderly with your executioner. . . .

And as for the critics — yes, indeed, I agree with you that I have no reason to complain. More than that, I confess to you that I am entirely astonished at the amount of reception I have met with — I who expected to be put in the stocks and pelted with the eggs of the last twenty years' 'singing birds' as a disorderly woman and freethinking poet! People have been so kind that, in the first place, I really come to modify my opinions somewhat upon their conventionality, to see the progress made in freedom of thought. Think of quite decent women taking the part of the book in a sort of *effervescence* which I hear of with astonishment. In fact, there has been an enormous quantity of extravagance talked and written on the subject, and I *know it* — oh, I know it. I wish I deserved some things — some things; I wish it were all true. But I see too distinctly what I *ought* to have written. Still, it is nearer

the mark than my former efforts — fuller, stronger, more sustained — and one may be encouraged to push on to something worthier, for I don't feel as if I had done yet — no indeed. I have had from Leigh Hunt a very pleasant letter of twenty pages, and I think I told you of the two from John Ruskin. In America, also, there's great success, and the publisher is said to have shed tears over the proofs (perhaps in reference to the hundred pounds he had to pay for them), and the critics congratulate me on having worked myself clear of all my affectations, mannerisms, and other morbidities.

Even 'Blackwood' is not to be complained of, seeing that the writer evidently belongs to an elder school, and judges from his own point of view. He is wrong, though, even in classical matters, as it seems to *me*.

I heard one of Thackeray's lectures, the one on George the Third, and thought it better than good — fine and touching. To what is it that people are objecting? At any rate, they crowd and pay.

Ah yes. You appreciate Robert; you know what is in his poetry. Certainly there is no pretension in *me* towards that profound suggestiveness, and I thank you for knowing it and saying it.

There is a real *poem* being lived between Mr. Kirkup and the 'spirits,' so called.[1] If I were to *write* it in a poem, I should beat 'Aurora' over and over. And such a tragic face the old man has, with his bleak white beard. Even Robert is touched.

Best love from him and your

Ever attached

BA.

[1] An odd commentary on this 'poem' may be found in Mrs. Orr's *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 219.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: February [1857].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I needn't say how much, how very much, pleasure your letter gave me. That the poem should really have touched you, reached you, with whatever drawbacks, is a joy. And then that Mr. Martin should have read it with any sort of interest! It was more than I counted on, as you know. Thank you, dearest Mrs. Martin — thank both of you for so much sympathy.

In respect to certain objections, I am quite sure you do me the justice to believe that I do not willingly give cause for offence. Without going as far as Robert, who holds that I 'couldn't be coarse if I tried,' (only that!) you will grant that I don't habitually dabble in the dirt; it's not the way of my mind or life. If, therefore, I move certain subjects in this work, it is because my conscience was first moved in me not to ignore them. What has given most offence in the book, more than the story of Marian — far more! — has been the reference to the condition of women in our cities, which a woman oughtn't to refer to, by any manner of means, says the conventional tradition. Now I have thought deeply otherwise. If a woman ignores these wrongs, then may women as a sex continue to suffer them; there is no help for any of us — let us be dumb and die. I have spoken therefore, and in speaking have used plain words — words which look like blots, and which you yourself would put away — words which, if blurred or softened, would imperil perhaps the force and righteousness of the moral influence. Still, I certainly will, when the time comes, go over the poem carefully, and see where an offence can be got rid of without loss otherwise. The second edition was issued so early that Robert would not let me alter even a comma, would not let me look between the pages in order to the least altera-

tion. He said (the truth) that my head was dizzy-blind with the book, and that, if I changed anything, it would be probably for the worse; like arranging a room in the dark. Oh no. Indeed he is not vexed that you should say what you do. On the contrary, he was *pleased* because of the much more that you said. As to your friend with the susceptible 'morals'—well, I could not help smiling indeed. I am assured too, by a friend of my own, that the 'mamas of England' in a body refuse to let their daughters read it. Still, the daughters emancipate themselves and *do*, that is certain; for the number of *young* women, not merely 'the strong-minded' as a sect, but pretty, affluent, happy women, surrounded by all the temptations of English respectability, that cover it with the most extravagant praises is surprising to me, who was not prepared for that particular kind of welcome. It's true that there's a quantity of hate to balance the love, only I think it chiefly seems to come from the less advanced part of society. (See how modest that sounds! But you will know what I mean.) I mean, from persons whose opinions are not in a state of growth, and who do not like to be disturbed from a settled position. Oh, that there are faults in the book, no human being knows so well as I; defects, weaknesses, great gaps of intelligence. Don't let me stop to recount them.

The review in 'Blackwood' proves to be by Mr. Aytoun; and coming from the camp of the enemy (artistically and socially) cannot be considered other than generous. It is not quite so by the 'North British,' where another poet (Patmore), who knows more, is somewhat depreciatory, I can't help feeling.

Now will you be sick of my literature; but you liked to hear, you said. If you would see, besides, I would show you what George sent me the other day, a number of the 'National Magazine,' with the most hideous engraving, from a medallion, you could imagine — the head of a 'strong-minded' giantess on the neck of a bull, and my name underneath! Penini

said, 'It's not a bit like; it's too old, and *not half so pretty*' — which was comforting under the trying circumstance, if anything could comfort one in despair. . . .

Your ever most affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: February 1857.]

My dearest Sarianna, — I am delighted, and so is Robert, that you should have found what pleases you in the clock. Here is Penini's letter, which takes up so much room that I must be sparing of mine — and, by the way, if you consider him improved in his writing, give the praise to Robert, who has been taking most patient pains with him indeed. You will see how the little curly head is turned with carnival doings. So gay a carnival never was in our experience — for until last year (when we were absent) all masks had been prohibited, and now everybody has eaten of the tree of good and evil till not an apple was left. Peni persecuted me to let him have a domino, with tears and embraces; he '*almost never* in all his life had had a domino,' and he would like it so. Not a black domino — no; he hated black — but a blue domino, trimmed with pink! that was his taste. The pink trimming I coaxed him out of; but for the rest I let him have his way, darling child; and certainly it answered, as far as the overflow of joy in his little heart went. Never was such delight. Morning and evening there he was in the streets, running Wilson out of breath, and lost sight of every ten minutes. 'Now, Lily, I do *pray* you not to call out "Penini! Penini!"' Not to be known was his immense ambition. Oh, of course he thought of nothing else. As to lessons, there was an absolute absence of wits. All Florence being turned out into the streets in one gigantic pantomime, one couldn't expect people to be wiser in-doors than out. For my part, the universal madness reached me sitting by the fire (whence I had not stirred for three

months); and you will open your eyes when I tell you that I went (in domino and masked) to the great opera ball. Yes, I did really. Robert, who had been invited two or three times to other people's boxes, had proposed to return this kindness by taking a box himself at the opera this night and entertaining two or three friends with *gallantina* and champagne. Just as he and I were lamenting the impossibility of my going, on that very morning the wind changed, the air grew soft and mild, and he maintained that I might and should go. There was no time to get a domino of my own (Robert himself had a beautiful one made, and I am having it metamorphosed into a black silk gown for myself!), so I sent out and hired one, buying the mask. And very much amused I was. I like to see these characteristic things. (I shall never rest, Sarianna, till I risk my reputation at the Bal de l'Opéra at Paris.) Do you think I was satisfied with staying in the box? No, indeed. Down I went, and Robert and I elbowed our way through the crowd to the remotest corner of the ball below. Somebody smote me on the shoulder and cried 'Bella mascherina!' and I answered as imprudently as one feels under a mask. At two o'clock in the morning, however, I had to give up and come away (being overcome by the heavy air), and ingloriously left Robert and our friends to follow at half-past four. Think of the refinement and gentleness — yes, I must call it *superiority* — of this people, when no excess, no quarrelling, no rudeness nor coarseness can be observed in the course of such wild masked liberty. Not a touch of license anywhere. And perfect social equality! Ferdinando side by side in the same ballroom with the Grand Duke, and no class's delicacy offended against! For the Grand Duke went down into the ballroom for a short time. The boxes, however, were dear. We were on a third tier, yet paid *2l.* 5*s.* English, besides entrance money. I think that, generally speaking, theatrical amusements are cheaper in Paris, in spite of apparent cheapnesses here. The pit here and stalls

are cheap. But 'women in society' can't go there, it is said; and you must take a whole box, if you want two seats in a box — which seems to me monstrous. People combine generally. . . .

Ever affectionate

Ba.

I meant to write only a word — and see! May it not be overweight.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: April 9 [1857].

Dearest Madonna, — I must not wait, lest I miss you in your transit to Naples; thank you for your dear letter, then. The weather has burst suddenly into summer (though it rains a little this morning), and I have been let out of prison to drive in the Cascine and to Bellosguardo. Beautiful, beautiful Florence. How beautiful at this time of year! The trees stand in their 'green mist' as if in a trance of joy. Oh, I do hope nothing will drive us out of our Paradise this summer, for I seem to hate the North more 'unnaturally' than ever.

Mrs. Stowe has just arrived, and called here yesterday and this morning, when Robert took her to see the salvators at the end of our street. I like her better than I thought I should — that is, I find more refinement in her voice and manner — no rampant Americanisms. Very simple and gentle, with a sweet voice; undesirous of shining or *poser*-ing, so it seems to me. Never did lioness roar more softly (that is quite certain); and the temptations of a sudden enormous popularity should be estimated, in doing her full justice. She is nice-looking, too; and there's something strong and copious and characteristic in her dusky wavy hair. For the rest, the brow has not very large capacity; and the mouth wants something both in frankness and sensitiveness, I should say. But what can one see in

a morning visit? I must wait for another opportunity. She spends to-morrow evening with us, and talks of remaining in Florence till the end of next week—so I shall see and hear more. Her books are not so much to me, I confess, as the fact is, that she above all women (yes, and men of the age) has moved the world—and *for good*.

I hear that Mrs. Gaskell is coming, whom I am sure to like and love. I know *that* by her letters, though I was stupid or idle enough to let our correspondence go by; and by her books, which I earnestly admire. How anxious I am to see the life of Charlotte Brontë! But we shall have to wait for it here.

Dearest friend, you don't mention Ma^dme^ de Goethe, but I do hope you will have her with you before long. The good to you will be immense, and after friendship (and reason) the sun and moon and earth of Italy will work for you in their places. May God grant to us all that you may be soon strong enough to throw every burden behind you. The griefs that are incurable are those which have our own sins festering in them. . . .

On April 6 we had tea out of doors, on the terrace of our friend Miss Blagden in her villa up [at] Bellosguardo (not exactly Aurora Leigh's,[1] mind). You seem to be lifted up above the world in a divine ecstasy. Oh, what a vision!

[1] See *Aurora Leigh*, p. 276:

> 'I found a house at Florence on the hill
> Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower which keeps
> A post of double observation o'er
> That valley of Arno (holding as a hand
> The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
> And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
> The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,
> Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
> Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.
> No sun could die nor yet be born unseen
> By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve

Have you read Victor Hugo's 'Contemplations'? We are doing so at last. As for *me*, my eyes and my heart melted over them—some of the personal poems are overcoming in their pathos; and nothing more exquisite in poetry can express deeper pain. . . .

Robert comes back. He says that Mrs. Stowe was very simple and pleasant. He likes her. So shall I, I think. She has the grace, too, to admire our Florence.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

I dare say the illustrations will be beautiful. But you are at work on a new book, are you not?

The mention of the 'Contemplations' of Victor Hugo in the preceding letter supplies a clue to the date of the following draft of an appeal to the Emperor Napoleon on behalf of the poet, which has been found among Mrs. Browning's papers. An endorsement on the letter says that it was not sent, but it is none the less worthy of being printed.

> Were magnified before us in the pure
> Illimitable space and pause of sky,
> Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
> Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall
> Of the garden drops the mystic floating grey
> Of olive trees (with interruptions green
> From maize and vine), until 'tis caught and torn
> Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses
> Which signs the way to Florence. Beautiful
> The city lies along the ample vale,
> Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street,
> The river trailing like a silver cord
> Through all, and curling loosely, both before
> And after, over the whole stretch of land
> Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes
> With farms and villas.'

Miss Blagden's villa was the Villa Briochion, which is alluded to elsewhere in the letters.

To the Emperor Napoleon

[April 1857].

Sire,—I am only a woman, and have no claim on your Majesty's attention except that of the weakest on the strongest. Probably my very name as the wife of an English poet, and as named itself a little among English poets, is unknown to your Majesty. I never approached my own sovereign with a petition, nor am skilled in the way of addressing kings. Yet having, through a studious and thoughtful life, grown used to great men (among the dead, at least), I cannot feel entirely at a loss in speaking to the Emperor Napoleon.

And I beseech you to have patience with me while I supplicate you. It is not for myself nor for mine.

I have been reading with wet eyes and a swelling heart (as many who love and some who hate your Majesty have lately done) a book called the 'Contemplations' of a man who has sinned deeply against you in certain of his political writings, and who expiates rash phrases and unjustifiable statements in exile in Jersey. I have no personal knowledge of this man; I never saw his face; and certainly I do not come now to make his apology. It is, indeed, precisely because he cannot be excused that, I think, he might worthily be forgiven. For this man, whatever else he is not, is a great poet of France, and the Emperor, who is the guardian of her other glories, should remember him and not leave him out. Ah, sire, what was written on 'Napoleon le Petit' does not touch your Majesty; but what touches you is, that no historian of the age should have to write hereafter, 'While Napoleon III. reigned, Victor Hugo lived in exile.' What touches you is, that when your people count gratefully the men of commerce, arms, and science secured by you to France, no voice shall murmur, 'But where is our poet?' What touches you is, that, however statesmen and politicians may justify his exclusion, it may

draw no sigh from men of sentiment and impulse, yes, and from women like myself. What touches you is, that when your own beloved young prince shall come to read these poems (and when you wish him a princely nature, you wish, sire, that such things should move him), he may exult to recall that his imperial father was great enough to overcome this great poet with magnanimity.

Ah, sire, you are great enough! You can allow for the peculiarity of the poetical temperament, for the temptations of high gifts, for the fever in which poets are apt to rage and suffer beyond the measure of other men. You can consider that when they hate most causelessly there is a divine love in them somewhere; and that when they see most falsely they are loyal to some ideal light. Forgive this enemy, this accuser, this traducer. Disprove him by your generosity. Let no tear of an admirer of his poetry drop upon your purple. Make an exception of him, as God made an exception of him when He gave him genius, and call him back ***without condition*** to his country and his daughter's grave.

I have written these words without the knowledge of any. Naturally I should have preferred, as a woman, to have addressed them through the mediation of the tender-hearted Empress Eugénie; but, a wife myself, I felt it would be harder for her Majesty to pardon an offence against the Emperor Napoleon, than it could be for the Emperor.

And I am driven by an irresistible impulse to your Majesty's feet to ask this grace. It is a woman's voice, sire, which dares to utter what many yearn for in silence. I have believed in Napoleon III. Passionately loving the democracy, I have understood from the beginning that it was to be served throughout Europe in you and by you. I have trusted you for doing greatly. I will trust you, besides, for pardoning nobly. You will be Napoleon in this also.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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Shortly after this date, on April 17, Mrs. Browning's father died. In the course of the previous summer an attempt made by a relative to bring about a reconciliation between him and his daughters was met with the answer that they had 'disgraced his family;' and, although he professed to have 'forgiven' them, he refused all intercourse, removed his family out of town when the Brownings came thither, and declined to give his daughter Henrietta's address to Mr. Kenyon's executor, who was instructed to pay her a small legacy. A further attempt at reconciliation was made by Mrs. Martin only a few months before his death, but had no better success. His pride stood in the way of his forgiveness to the end.

On receiving the news of his death, the following letter was written by Robert Browning to Mrs. Martin; but it was not until two months later that Mrs. Browning was able to bring herself to write to anyone outside her own family.

Robert Browning to Mrs. Martin

Florence: May 3, 1857.

My dear Mrs. Martin, — Truest thanks for your letter. We had the intelligence from George last Thursday week, having been only prepared for the illness by a note received from Arabel the day before. Ba was sadly affected at first; miserable to see and hear. After a few days tears came to her relief. She is now very weak and prostrated, but improving in strength of body and mind: I have no fear for the result. I suppose you know, at least, the very little that we know; and how unaware poor Mr. Barrett was of his imminent death: 'he bade them,' says Arabel, 'make him comfortable for the night, but a moment before the last.' And he had dismissed her and her aunt about an hour before, with a cheerful or careless word about 'wishing them good night.' So it is all over now, all

hope of better things, or a kind answer to entreaties such as I have seen Ba write in the bitterness of her heart. There must have been something in the organisation, or education, at least, that would account for and extenuate all this; but it has caused grief enough, I know; and now here is a new grief not likely to subside very soon. Not that Ba is other than reasonable and just to herself in the matter: she does not reproach herself at all; it is all mere grief, as I say, that this should have been *so;* and I sympathise with her there.

George wrote very affectionately to tell me; and dear, admirable Arabel sent a note the very next day to prove to Ba that there was nothing to fear on her account. Since then we have heard nothing. The funeral was to take place in Herefordshire. We had just made up our minds to go on no account to England this year. Ba felt the restraint on her too horrible to bear. I will, or she will, no doubt, write and tell you of herself; and you must write, dear Mrs. Martin, will you not?

Kindest regard to Mr. Martin and all.

Yours faithfully ever,

ROBERT BROWNING.

E. B. Browning to Mrs. Martin

Florence: July 1, [1857].

Thank you, thank you from my heart, my dearest friend — this poor heart, which has been so torn and mangled, — for your dear, tender sympathy, whether expressed in silence or in words. Of the past I cannot speak. You understand, yes, you understand. And when I say that you understand (and feel that you do), it is an expression of belief in the largeness of your power of understanding, seeing that few *can* understand — few can. There has been great bitterness — great bitterness, which is natural; and some recoil against myself, more, perhaps, than is quite rational. Now I am

much better, calm, and not despondingly calm (as, off and on, I have been), able to read and talk, and keep from vexing my poor husband, who has been a good deal tried in all these things. Through these three months you and what you told me touched me with a thought of comfort — came the nearest to me of all. May God bless you and return it to you a hundredfold, dear dear friend!

I believe *hope* had died in me long ago of reconciliation in this world. Strange, that what I called 'unkindness' for so many years, in departing should have left to me such a sudden desolation! And yet, it is not strange, perhaps.

No, I cannot write any more. You will understand. . . .

We shall be in Paris next summer. This year we remain quietly where we are. Presently we may creep to the seaside or into the mountains to avoid the great heats, but no further. My temptation is to lie on the sofa, and never stir nor speak, only I don't give up, be certain. I drive out for two or three hours on most days, and I hear Peni's lessons, and am good and obedient. If I could get into hard regular work of some kind, it would be excellent for me, I know; but the 'flesh is weak.' Oh, no, to have gone to England this summer would have *helped nobody*, and would have been very overcoming to *me*. I was not fit for it, indeed, and Robert was averse on his own account. . . .

May God bless you both, dearest friends. My little Penini is bright and well. I have begun to teach him German. I do hope you won't fatigue yourselves too much at Colwall. Enjoy the summer and the roses, and be well, be well. We shall meet next year. . . .

Once more, goodbye.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Robert's love as ever.

This is the first letter I have written to anyone out

of my own family. I hate writing, and can't help being stupid.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: [about July 1857].

I write soon, you see, dearest Fanny. I thank you for all, but I do beseech you, *dear*, not to say a word more to me of what is said of me. The truth is, I am made of paper, and it tears me. Do not, dear. Make no reference to things personal to myself. As far as I could read and understand, it was absurd, perfectly *ungenuine*. I shall say nothing to anybody. I have torn that sheet. Do not refer to the subject to Isa Blagden. And there — I have done.

No — I thank you; and I know it was your kindness entirely. Will you, if you love me, *not* touch on the subject (I mean on the personal thing to myself) in your next letters, not even by saying that you were sorry you did once touch on them. I know how foolish and morbid I must seem to you. So I am made, and I can't help my idiosyncrasies.

Now don't mistake me. Tell me all about the spirits, only not about what they say of *me*. I am very interested. The drawback is, that without any sort of doubt they *personate falsely*.

We are seething in the heat. The last three days have been a composition of Gehenna and Paradise. It is a perpetual steam bath. Yet Robert and I have not finished our plans for escaping. Mrs. Jameson is here still, recovering her health and spirits. The Villa hospitality goes on as usual, and the evening before last we had tea on the terrace by a divine sunset, with a favoring breath or two. Only even there we wished for Lazarus's finger.

Certainly Florence will not be bearable many days longer. Write to me though, at Florence as usual. . . .

It is said that Hume, who is back again in Paris and under the shadow of the Emperor's wing, has been the

means of an extraordinary manifestation, two spiritual figures, male and female, who were *recognised* by their friends. Five or six persons (including the medium) fainted away at this apparition. It happened in Paris, lately.

Yes, I mistrust the mediums less than I do the spirits who write. Tell me. . . .

Write and tell me everything *with exceptions* such as I have set down. And forgive my poor brittle body, which shakes and breaks. May God love you, dear.

Yours in true affection,

Ba.

At the end of July, Florence had become unbearable, and the Brownings removed, for the third time, to the Bagni di Lucca, whither they were followed by some of their friends, notably Miss Blagden and Mr. Robert Lytton. Unfortunately, their holiday was marred by the dangerous illness of Lytton, which not only kept them in great anxiety for a considerable time, but also entailed much labour in nursing on Mr. Browning and Miss Blagden. Besides Mrs. Browning's letters, a letter from her husband to his sister is given below, containing an account of the earlier stages of the illness.

Robert Browning to Miss Browning

Bagni di Lucca: August 18, [1857].

Dearest, — We arrived here on the 30th last, and two or three days after were followed by Miss Blagden, Miss Bracken, and Lytton — all for our sake: they not otherwise wanting to come this way. Lytton arrived unwell, got worse soon, and last Friday week was laid up with a sort of nervous fever, caused by exposure to the sun, or something, acting on his nervous frame: since then he has been very ill in bed — doctor, anxiety &c. as you may suppose: they are exactly opposite us, at twelve or fifteen feet distance only.

Through sentimentality and economy combined, Isa would have no nurse (an imbecile arrangement), and all has been done by her, with me to help: I have sate up four nights out of the last five, and sometimes been there nearly all day beside. . . .[1] He is much better to-day, taken broth, and will, I hope, have no relapse, poor fellow: imagine what a pleasant holiday we all have! Otherwise the place is very beautiful, and cool exceedingly. We have done nothing notable yet, but all are very well, Peni particularly so: as for me, I bathe in the river, a rapid little mountain stream, every morning at 6½, and find such good from the practice that I shall continue it, and whatever I can get as like it as possible, to the end of my days, I hope: the strength of all sorts therefrom accruing is wonderful: I thought the shower baths perfection, but this is far above it. . . . I was so rejoiced to hear from you, and think you so wise in staying another month. I sent the 'Ath.' to 151 R. de G. Kindest love to papa: we can't get news from England, but the Americans have paid up the rest of the money for 'Aurora:' by the bye, in this new book of Ruskin's, the drawing book,[2] he says '"Aurora Leigh" is the finest poem written in any language this century.' There is a review of it, which I have not yet got, in the 'Rivista di Firenze' of this month. God bless you. I will write very soon again. Do you write at once. Ba will add a word. How fortunate about the books! How is Milsand? Pray always remember my best love to him.

E. B. Browning to Miss Browning

[Same date.]

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert will have told you, I dare say, what a heavy time we have had here with poor Lytton.

[1] A line or two has been cut off the bottom of the sheet at this place.

[2] The *Elements of Drawing*.

It was imprudent of him to come to Florence at the hottest of the year, and to expose himself perfectly unacclimated; and the chance by which he was removed here just in time to be nursed was happy for him and all of us. We have had great heat in the days even here, of course — no blotting out, even by mountains, of the Italian sun; but the cool nights extenuate very much — refresh and heal. Now I do hope the corner is turned of the illness. Isa Blagden has been devoted, sitting up night after night, and Robert has sate up four nights that she might not really die at her post. There is nothing *infectious* in the fever, so don't be afraid. Robert is quite well, with good appetite and good spirits, and Peni is like a rose possessed by a fairy. They both bathe in the river, and profit (as I am so glad you do). Not that it's a real river, though it has a name, the *Lima*. A mere mountain stream, which curls itself up into holes in the rocks to admit of bathing. Then, as far as they have been able on account of Lytton, they have had riding on donkeys and mountain ponies, Peni as bold as a lion.

[*The last words of the letter, with the signature, have been cut off.*]

To Mrs. Jameson

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca: August 22, [1857].

As you bid me write, my dear friend, about Lytton, I write, but I grieve to say we are still very uneasy about him. For sixteen days he has been prostrate with this gastric fever, and the disease is not baffled, though the pulse is not high nor the head at all affected. Dr. Trotman, however, is uncheerful about him — is what medical men call '*cautious*' in giving an opinion, observing that, though *at present* he is not in danger, the delicacy of his constitution gives room for great apprehension in the case of the least turning towards relapse. Robert has been up with him

during eight nights, and Isa Blagden eight nights. Nothing can exceed her devotion to him by night or day. We have persuaded her, however, at last to call in a nurse for the nights. I am afraid for Robert, and in fact a trained nurse can do certain things better than the most zealous and tender friend can pretend to do. You may suppose how saddened we all are. Dear Lytton! At intervals he talks and can hear reading, but this morning he is lower again. In fact, from the first he has been very apprehensive about himself — inclined to talk of divine things, of the state of his soul and God's love, and to hold this life but slackly.

I feel I am writing a horrible account to you. You will conclude the worst from it, and that is what I don't want you to do. The pulse has never been high, and is now much lower, and if he can be kept from a relapse he will live. I pray God he may live. He is not altered in the face, and Dr. Trotman reiterated this morning, 'There *is* no danger at present.'

You are better. I thank God for it. Oh, yes, it is very beautiful, that cathedral. The weather here is cool and enjoyable by day even. At nights it is really cold, and I *have* thought of a blanket once or twice as of a thing tolerable. I will write again when there is a change. The course of the fever may extend to six days more.

Your ever most affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Thursday, [end of August 1857].

Dearest Friend, — I think it better to inclose to you this letter which has come to your address. Thank you for your kind words about Lytton, which will be very soothing to him. He continues better, and is preparing to take his first drive to-day, for half an hour, with his *nurse* and Robert. See how weak he must be, and the hollow cheeks and temples remain as signs of the past. Still, he is conva-

lescent, and begins to think of poems and apple puddings in a manner other than celestial. I do thank God that our anxieties have ended so.

Robert bathes in the river every morning, which does him great good; besides the rides at mornings and evenings on mountain ponies with Annette Bracken and a Crimean hero (as Mrs. Stisted has it), who has turned up at the hotel, with one leg and so many agreeable and amiable qualities that everybody is charmed with him.

Robert had a letter from Chapman yesterday. Not much news. He speaks of two penny papers, sold lately, after making the fortune of their proprietors, for twenty-five and thirty-five thousand pounds. If Robert 'could but write bad enough,' says the learned publisher, he should recommend one of them. But even Charles Reade was found too good, and the sale fell ten thousand in a few weeks on account of a serial tale of his, so he had to make place to his *worses*. Chapman hears of a 'comprehensive review' being about to appear in the 'Westminster' on 'Aurora,' whether for or against he cannot tell. The third edition sells well.

So happy I am to hear that Mr. Procter's son is safe. We saw his name in the 'Galignani,' and were alarmed. Lytton has heard from Forster, but I had no English news from the letter. I get letters from my sisters which make me feel '*froissée*' all over, except that they seem pretty well. My eldest brother has returned from Jamaica, and has taken a place with a Welsh name on the Welsh borders for three years — what I knew he would do. He wrote me some tender words, dear fellow. . . .

May God bless you.

Yours in much love, Ba.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
September 14, 1857 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — A letter from me will have crossed yours and told you of all our misadventures. It has been a summer to me full of blots, vexations, anxieties; and if, in spite of everything, I am physically stronger for the fresh air and smell of green leaves, that's a proof that soul and body are two.

Our friends of the hotel went away last Saturday, and I have a letter from Isa Blagden with a good account of Lytton. He goes back to Villa Bricchieri, where they are to house together, unless Sir Edward comes down (which he may do) to catch up his son and change the plan. Isa has not quite killed herself with nursing him, a little of her being still left to express what has been.

Now, dear Fanny, I am going to try to tell you of *our* plans. No, 'plans' is not the word; our thoughts are in the purely elemental state so far. But we *think* of going to Rome (or Naples) at the far end of November, and of staying here as many days deep into October meanwhile as the cold mountain air will let us. On leaving this place we go to Florence and wait. Unless, indeed (which is possible too), we go to Egypt and the Holy Land, in which case we shall not remain where we are beyond the end of September. . . .

I never could consent to receive my theology — or any other species of guidance, in fact — from the 'spirits,' so called. I have no more confidence, apart from my own conscience and discretionary selection, in spirits out of the body than in those embodied. The submission of the whole mind and judgment carries you in either case to the pope — or to the devil. So *I* think. Don't let them bind you hand and foot. Resist. Be yourself. Also, where (as in

the medium-writing) you have the human mixture to evolve the spiritual sentiment from, the insecurity becomes doubly insecure. . . .

Your ever affectionate

BA.

The end of the time at the Bagni di Lucca was clouded by another anxiety, caused by the illness of Penini. It was not, however, a long one, and early in October the whole party was able to return to Florence, where they remained throughout the winter and the following spring. Letters of this period are, however, scarce, and there is nothing particular to record concerning it. Since the publication of 'Aurora Leigh,' Mrs. Browning had been taking a holiday from poetical composition; and, indeed, she never resumed it on a large scale, and published no other volume save the 'Poems before Congress,' which were the fruit of a later period of special excitement. She had put her whole self into 'Aurora Leigh,' and seemed to have no further message to give to mankind. It is evident, too, that her strength was already beginning to decline and the various family and public anxieties which followed 1856 made demands on what remained of it too great to allow of much application to poetry.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Bagni di Lucca:] Monday, September 28, [1857].

You will understand too well why I have waited some days before answering your letter, dearest Fanny, though you bade me write at once, when I tell you that my own precious Penini has been ill with gastric fever and is even now confined to his bed. Eleven days ago, when he was looking like a live rose and in an exaggeration of spirits, he proposed to go with me, to run by my portantina in which I went to pay a visit some mile and a half away. The portantini men walked too fast for him, and he was tired

and heated. Then, while I paid my visit, he played by the river with a child of the house, and returned with me in the dusk. He complained of being tired during the return, and I took him up into my portantina for ten minutes. He was over-tired, however, over-heated, over-chilled, and the next day had fever and complained of his head. We did not think much of it; and the morning after he seemed so recovered that we took him with us to dine in the mountains with some American friends (the Eckleys — did you hear of them in Rome?) — twenty miles in the carriage, and ten miles on donkey-back. He was in high spirits, and came home at night singing at the top of his voice — probably to keep off the creeping sense of illness, for he has confessed since that he felt unwell even then. The next day the fever set in. The medical man doubted whether it was measles, scarlatina, or what; but soon the symptoms took the decisive aspect. He has been in bed, strictly confined to bed, since last Sunday-week night — strictly confined, except for one four hours, after which exertion he had a relapse. It is the same fever as Mr. Lytton's, only not as severe, I thank God; the attacks coming on at nights chiefly, and terrifying us, as you may suppose. The child's sweetness and goodness, too, his patience and gentleness, have been very trying. He said to me, 'You pet! don't be unhappy for *me*. Think it's a poor little boy in the street, and be just only a little sorry, and not unhappy at all.' Well, we may thank God that the bad time seems passed. He is still in bed, but it is a matter of precaution chiefly. The fever is quite in abeyance — has been for two days, and we have all to be grateful for two most tranquil nights. He amuses himself in putting maps together, and cutting out paper, and packing up his desk to *go to Florence*, which is the *idée fixe* just now. In fact when he can be moved we shall not wait here a day, for the rains have set in, and the dry elastic air of Florence will be excellent for him. The medical man (an Italian) promises us almost

that we may be able to go in a week from this time; but we won't hurry, we will run no risks. For some days he has been allowed no other sort of nourishment but ten dessert-spoonfuls of thin broth twice a day — literally nothing; not a morsel of bread, not a drop of tea, nothing. Even now the only change is, a few more spoonfuls of the same broth. It is hard, for his appetite cries out aloud; and he has agonising visions of beefsteak pies and buttered toast seen in *mirage*. Still his spirits don't fail on the whole and now that the fever is all but gone, they rise, till we have to beg him to be quiet and not to talk so much. He had the flower-girl in by his bedside yesterday, and it was quite impossible to help laughing, so many Florentine airs did he show off. 'Per Bacco, ho una fame terribile, e non voglio aver più pazienza con questo Dottore.' The doctor, however, seems skilful. . . .

But you may think how worn out I have been in body and soul, and how under these circumstances we think little of Jerusalem or of any other place but our home at Florence. Still, we shall probably pass the winter either at Rome or Naples, but I know no more than a swaddled baby which. Also we *shan't* know, probably, till the end of November, when we take out our passports. Doubt is our element. . . .

I must go to my Peni. I am almost happy about him now. And yet — oh, his lovely rosy cheeks, his round fat little shoulders, his strength and spring of a month ago! — at the best, we must lose our joy and pride in these for a time. May God bless you. I know you will feel for me, and that makes me so egotistical.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: February 1858.]

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert is going to write to dear M. Milsand, whose goodness is 'passing that of men,' of all

common friends certainly. Robert's thanks are worth more than mine, and so I shall leave it to Robert to thank him.

The 'grippe' has gripped us here most universally, and no wonder, considering our most exceptional weather; and better the grippe than the fever which preceded it. Such cold has not been known here for years, and it has extended throughout the south, it seems, to Rome and Naples, where people are snowed and frozen up. So strange. The Arno, for the first time since '47, has had a slice or two of ice on it. Robert has suffered from the prevailing malady, which did not however, through the precautions we took, touch his throat or chest, amounting only to a bad cold in the head. Peni was afflicted in the same way but in a much slighter degree, and both are now quite well. As for me I have caught no cold — only losing my breath and my soul in the usual way, the cough not being much. So that we have no claim, any of us, on your compassion, you see . . .

I think, I think Miss Blackwell has succeeded in frightening you a little. In the case of *chaos*, she will fly to England, I suppose; and even there she may fall on a refugee plot; for I have seen a letter of Mazzini's in which it was written that people stood on ruins in England, and that at any moment there might be a crash! Certainly, confusion in Paris would be followed by confusion in Italy and everywhere on the Continent at least, so I should never think of running away, let what might happen. In '52 and '53, when we were in Paris, there was more danger than *could* arise now, under a successful plot even; for, even if the Emperor fell, the people and the army seem prepared to stand by the dynasty. Also, public order has attained to some of the force of an habitual thing.

As to the crime,[1] it has no more sympathy here than in France — be sure of that. That unscrupulous bad party is repudiated by this majority — by this people as a mass. I

[1] Orsini's attempt on the life of the Emperor Napoleon on January 14, 1858.

hear nothing but lamentations that Italians should be dishonored so by their own hands. Father Prout says that the Emperor's speech is 'the most heroic document of this century,' and in my mind the praise is merited. So indignant I feel with Mazzini and all who name his name and walk in his steps, that I couldn't find it in my heart to write (as I was going to do) to that poor bewitched Jessie on her marriage. Really, when I looked at the pen, I *couldn't move it.* . . .

Best love from

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: March 27, [1858].

This moment I take up my pen to write to you, my dearest Mrs. Martin. Did you not receive a long letter I wrote to you in Paris? No? Answer me categorically. . . .

And you are not very strong, even now? That grieves me. But here is the sun to make us all strong. For my part, my chest has not been particularly wrong this winter, nor my cough too troublesome. But the weight of the whole year heavy with various kinds of trouble, added to a trying winter, seems to have stamped out of me the vital fluid, and I am physically low, to a degree which makes me glad of renewed opportunities of getting the air; and I mean to do little but drive out for some time. It does not answer to be mastered so. For months I have done nothing but dream and read French and German romances; and the result (of learning a good deal of German) isn't the most useful thing in the world one can attain to. Then, of course, I teach Peni for an hour or so. He reads German, French, and, of course, Italian, and plays on the piano remarkably well, for which Robert deserves the chief credit. A very gentle, sweet child he is; sweet to look at and listen to; affectionate and good to live with, a real 'treasure' so far.

His passion is music; and as we are afraid of wearing his brain, we let him give most of his study-time to the piano.

So you want me, you expect me, I suppose, to approve of the miserable, undignified, unconscientious doings in England on the conspiracy question?[1] No, indeed. I would rather we had lost ten battles than stultified ourselves in the House of Commons with Brummagem brag and Derby intrigues before the eyes of Europe and America. It seems to me utterly pitiful. I hold that the most susceptible of nations should not reasonably have been irritated by the Walewski despatch, which was absolutely true in its statement of facts. Ah, dearest friend, *how* true I know better than you do; for I know of knowledge how this doctrine of assassination is held by chief refugees and communicated to their disciples in England — yes, to noble hearts, and to English hands still innocent — my very soul has bled over these things. With my own ears I have heard them justified. For nights I have been disturbed in my sleep with the thoughts of them. In the name of liberty, which I love, and of the Democracy, which I honour, I protest against them. And if such things can be put down, I hold they should be put down; and that the Conspiracy Bill is the smallest and lightest step that can be taken towards the putting down. For the rest, the great Derby intrigue, as shown in its acts, and as resulting in its State papers, nothing in history, it seems to me, was ever so small and mean.

What I think of *him?* Why, I think he is the only great man of his age, speaking of public men. I think 'Napoleon

[1] Referring to the Conspiracy Bill introduced by Lord Palmerston after the Orsini conspiracy against Napoleon in January 1858, and to the outcry against it, as an act of subservience to France, which led to Palmerston's fall. Count Walewski was the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his despatch, alluded to below, called the attention of the English Government to the shelter afforded by England to conspirators of the type of Orsini.

III devant le peuple anglais' a magnificent State paper. I confess to you it drew the tears to my eyes as I read it. So grand, so calm, so simply true!

And now with regard to Switzerland. You must remember that there is such a thing as an international law, and that only last year the Swiss appealed in virtue of it to France about the Neufchâtel refugees, and that France received and acted on that appeal. The very translation of the French despatch adds to the injustice done to it in England; because '*insister*' does not mean to 'insist upon a thing being done,' but to 'urge it upon one's attention.'

'The Times,' 'The Times.' Why, 'The Times' has intellect, but no conscience. 'The Times' is the most immoral of journals, as well as the most able. 'The Times,' on this very question of the Conspiracy Bill, has swerved, and veered, and dodged, till its readers may well be dizzy if they read every paragraph every day.

See how I fall into a fury. 'Oh, Liberty!' I would cry, like the woman who did not love liberty more than I do — 'Oh, Liberty, what deeds are done in thy name!' and (looking round Italy) what sorrows are suffered!

For I do fear that Mazzini is at the root of the evil; that man of unscrupulous theory!

Now you will be enough disgusted with me. Tell me that you and dear Mr. Martin forgive me. I never saw Orsini, but have heard and known much of him. Unfortunate man. He died better than he lived — it is all one can say. Surely you admit that the permission to read that letter on the trial was large-hearted. And it has vexed Austria to the last degree, I am happy to say. It was not allowed to be read here, by the Italian public, I mean.

Our plans are perfectly undefined, but we do hope to escape England. . . . Robert talks of Egypt for the winter. I don't know what may happen; and in the meantime would rather not be pulled and pulled by kind people in England, who want me or fancy they do. You know

everybody is as free as I am now, and freer; and if they do want me, and it isn't fancy — never mind! We may see you perhaps, in Paris, after all, this summer. . . .

Now let me tell you. Home, my *protégé* prophet, is in Italy. Think of that. He was in Pisa and in Florence for a day, saw friends of his and acquaintances of ours with whom he stayed four months on the last occasion, and who implicitly believe in him. An English woman, who from infidel opinions was converted by his instrumentality to a belief in the life after death, has died in Paris, and left him an annuity of £240, English. On coming here, he paid all his wandering debts, I am glad to hear, and is even said to have returned certain *gifts* which had been rendered unacceptable to him from the bad opinion of the givers. I hear, too, that his manners, as well as morals, are wonderfully improved. He is gone to Rome, and will return here to pay a visit to his friends in Florence after a time. The object of his coming was health. While he passed through Tuscany, the *power* seemed to be leaving him, but he has recovered it tenfold, says my informant, so I hope we shall hear of more wonders. Did you read the article in the 'Westminster'? The subject *se prête au ridicule*, but ridicule is not disproof. The Empress Eugénie protects his little sister, and has her educated in Paris.

Surely I have made up for silence. Dearest friends, both of you, may God bless you.

Your affectionate

BA.

Robert's love and Peni's.

In the summer of 1858 an expedition was made to France, in order to visit Mr. Browning's father and sister; but no attempt was made to extend the journey into England. In fact, the circle of their flights from Florence was becoming smaller; and as 1856 saw Mrs. Browning's last visit to England, so 1858 saw her last visit to France,

or indeed, beyond the borders of Italy at all. It was only a short visit, too, — not longer than the usual expeditions into the mountains to escape the summer heat of Florence. In the beginning of July they reached Paris, where they stayed at the Hôtel Hyacinthe, rue St. Honoré, for about a fortnight, before going on to Havre in company with old Mr. Browning and Miss Browning. There they remained until September, when they returned to Paris for about a month, and thence, early in October, set out for Italy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Hôtel Hyacinthe, St. Honoré:
Wednesday and Thursday, July 8, 1858 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — The scene changes. No more cypresses, no more fireflies, no more dreaming repose on burning hot evenings. Push out the churches, push in the boulevards. Here I am, sitting alone at this moment, in an hotel near the Tuileries, where we have taken an apartment for a week, a pretty salon, with the complement of velvet sofas, and arm-chairs, and looking-glasses, and bedrooms to correspond, with clocks at distances of three yards, as if the time was in desperate danger of forgetting itself — which it is, of course. Paris looks more splendid than ever, and we were not too much out of breath with fatigue, on our arrival last night, to admit of various cries of admiration from all of us. It is a wonderfully beautiful city; and wonderfully cold considering the climate we came from. Think of our finding ourselves forced into winter suits, and looking wistfully at the grate. I did so this morning. But now there is sunshine.

We had a prosperous journey, except the sea voyage which prostrated all of us — *Annunziata*, to 'the lowest deep' of misery. At Marseilles we slept, and again at Lyons and Dijon, taking express trains the whole way, so that there was as little fatigue as possible; and what with the reviving

change of air and these precautions, I felt less tired throughout the journey than I have sometimes felt at Florence after a long drive and much talking. We had scarcely any companions in the carriages, and were able to stretch to the full longitude of us — a comfort always; and I had 'Madame Ancelot,' and 'Doit et Avoir,' which dropped into my bag from Isa's kind fingers on the last evening, and we gathered 'Galignanis' and 'Illustrations' day by day. Travelling has really become a luxury. I feel the *repose* of it chiefly. Yes, no possibility of unpleasant visitors! no fear of horrible letters! quite lifted above the plane of bad news, or of the expectation of bad news, which is nearly the same thing. There you are, shut in, in a carriage! Quite out of reach of the telegraph even, which you mock at as you run alongside the wires.

Yes, but some visitors, some faces, and voices are missed. And altogether I was very sad at leaving my Italy, oh, very sad! . . .

Tell me how you like 'up in the villa' life, and how long you shall bear it.

Paris! I have not been out of the house, except when I came into it. But to-day, Thursday, I mean to drive out a little with Robert. You know I have a *weakness* for Paris, and a *passion* for Italy; which would operate thus, perhaps, that I could easily stay here when once here, if there was but a sun to stay with me. We are in admiration, all of us, at everything, from cutlets to costumes. On the latter point I shall give myself great airs over you barbarians presently — no offence to Zerlinda — and, to begin, pray draw your bonnets more over your faces.

I would rather send this bit than wait, as I did not write to you from Marseilles.

May God bless you. If you knew how happy I think you for being in Italy — if you knew.

I shiver with the cold. I tie up three loves to send you from Your truly affectionate

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

Hôtel Hyacinthe, St. Honoré, Paris:
Thursday [July 8, 1858].

My dearest dear Isa, — We are here, having lost nothing — neither a carpet bag nor a bit of our true love for you. We arrived the evening before last, and this letter should have been written yesterday if I hadn't been interrupted. Such a pleasant journey we had, after the curse of the sea! ('*Where there shall be no more sea*' beautifies the thought of heaven to me. But Frederick Tennyson's prophets shall compound for as many railroads as they please.)

In fact, we did admirably by land. We were of unbridled extravagance, and slept both at Lyons and Dijon, and travelled by express trains besides, so that we were almost alone the whole way, and able to lie at full length and talk and read, and 'Doit et Avoir' did duty by me, I assure you — to say nothing of 'Galignanis' and French newspapers. I was nearly sorry to arrive, and Robert suggested the facility of 'travelling on for ever so.' He (by help of *nux*) was in a heavenly state of mind, and never was the French people — public manners, private customs, general bearing, hostelry, and cooking, more perfectly appreciated than by him and all of us. Judge of the courtesy and liberality. *One* box had its lid opened, and when Robert disclaimed smuggling, 'Je vous crois, monsieur' dismissed the others. Then the passport was never looked at after a glance at Marseilles. I am thinking of writing to the 'Times,' or should be if I could keep my temper.

So you see, dear Isa, I am really very well for me to be so pert. Yes, indeed, I am very well. The journey did not overtire me, and change of air had its usual reviving effect. Also, Robert keeps boasting of his influx of energies, and his appetite is renewed. We have resolved nothing about our sea plans, but have long lists of places,

and find it difficult to choose among so many enchanting paradises, with drawbacks of 'dearness,' &c. &c. Meanwhile we are settled comfortably in an hotel close to the Tuileries, in a pretty salon and pleasant bedrooms, for which we don't pay exorbitantly, taken for a week, and we shall probably outstay the week. Robert has the deep comfort of finding his father, on whose birthday we arrived, looking ten years younger — really, I may say so — and radiant with joy at seeing him and Peni. Dear Mr. Browning and Sarianna will go with us wherever we go, of course.

Paris looks more beautiful than ever, and we were not too dead to see this as we drove through the streets on Wednesday evening. The development of architectural splendour everywhere is really a sight worth coming to see, even from Italy. Observe, I always feel the charm. And yet I yearn back to my Florence — the dearer the farther.

We slept at Dijon, where Robert, in a passion of friendship, went out twice to stand before Maison Milsand (one of the shows of the town), and muse and bless the threshold. Little did he dream that Milsand was there at that moment, having been called suddenly from Paris by the dangerous illness of his mother. So we miss our friend; but we shall not, I think, altogether, for he talked of following us to the sea, Sarianna says, and even if he is restrained from doing this, we shall pass some little time in Paris on our return, and so see him. . . .

Mrs. Jameson is here, but goes on Saturday to England.

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

2 Rue de Perry, Le Havre, Maison Versigny:
July 23, 1858 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny,— . . . I gave you an account of our journey to Paris, which I won't write over again, especially as you may have read some things like it. In Paris we remained a fortnight except a day, and I liked it as I always like Paris, for which I have a decided fancy. And yet I did nothing, except in one shop, and in a fiacre driving round and round, and sometimes at a restaurant, dining round and round. But Paris is so full of life — murmurs so of the fountain of intellectual youth for ever and ever — that rolling up the rue de Rivoli (much more the Boulevards) suggests a quicker beat of the fancy's heart; and I like it — I like it. The architectural beauty is wonderful. Give me Venice on water, Paris on land — each in its way is a dream city. If one had but the sun there — such a sun as one has in Italy! Or if one had no lungs here — such lungs as are in me. But no. Under actual circumstances something different from Paris must satisfy me. Also, when all's said and sighed, I love Italy — I love my Florence. I love that 'hole of a place,' as Father Prout called it lately — with all its dust, its cobwebs, its spiders even, I love it, and with somewhat of the kind of blind, stupid, respectable, obstinate love which people feel when they talk of 'beloved native lands.' I feel this for Italy, by mistake for England. Florence is my chimney-corner, where I can sulk and be happy. But you haven't come to that yet. In spite of which, you will like the Baths of Lucca, just as you like Florence, for certain advantages — for the exquisite beauty, and the sense of abstraction from the vulgarities and vexations of the age, which is the secret of the strange charm of the south,

perhaps — who knows? And yet there are vulgarities and vexations even in Tuscany, if one digs for them — or doesn't dig, sometimes. . . .

In Paris we saw Father Prout, who was in great force and kindness, and Charles Sumner, passing through the burning torture under the hands of French surgeons, which is approved of by the brains of English surgeons. Do you remember the Jesuit's agony, in the 'Juif Errant'? Precisely that. Exposed to the living coal for seven minutes, and the burns taking six weeks to heal. Mr. Sumner refused chloroform — from some foolish heroic principle, I imagine, and suffered intensely. Of course he is not able to stir for some time after the operation, and can't read or sleep from the pain. Now, he is just 'healed,' and is allowed to travel for two months, after which he is to return and be burned again. Isn't it a true martyrdom? I ask. What is apprehended is paralysis, or at best nervous infirmity for life, from the effect of the blows (on the spine) of that savage.

Then, just as we arrived in Paris, dear Lady Elgin had another 'stroke,' and was all but gone. She rallied, however, with her wonderful vitality, and we left her sitting in her garden, fixed to the chair, of course, and not able to speak a word, nor even to gesticulate distinctly, but with the eloquent soul full and radiant, alive to both worlds. Robert and I sate there, talking politics and on other subjects, and there she sate and let no word drop unanswered by her bright eyes and smile. It was a beautiful sight. Robert fed her with a spoon from her soup-plate, and she signed, as well as she could, that he should kiss her forehead before he went away. She was always so fond of Robert, as women are apt to be, you know — even *I*, a little. . . .

Forster wrote the other day, melancholy with the misfortunes of his friends, though he doesn't name Dickens. Landor had just fled to his (Forster's) house in London for protection from *an action for libel.*

See what a letter I have written. Write to me, dearest Fanny, and love me. Oh, how glad I shall be to be back among you again in my Florence!

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

Maison Versigny, 2 rue de Perry, Le Havre:
July 24, 1858 [postmark].

Dearest Mona Nina,— Have you rather wondered at not hearing? We have been a-wandering, a-wandering over the world — have been to Étretat and failed, and now are ignominiously settled at Havre — yes, at Havre, the name of which we should have scorned a week ago as a mere roaring commercial city. But after all, as sometimes I say with originality, 'civilisation is a good thing.' The country about Étretat is very pretty, and the coast picturesque with fantastic rocks, but the accommodation dear in proportion to its badness; which I do believe is the case everywhere with places, now and then even with persons — dear in proportion to their badness. We could get three bedrooms, a salon, and kitchen, one opening into another and no other access, and the kitchen presenting the first door, all furnished exactly alike, except that where the bedroom had a bed the kitchen had a stove; wooden chairs *en suite*, not an inch of carpet, and just an inch of looking-glass in the best bedroom. View, a potato-patch, and price two hundred francs a month. Robert took it in a 'fine phrenzy,' on which I rebelled, and made him give it up on a sacrifice of ten francs, which was the only cheap thing in the place, as far as I observed anything. Also, the bay is so restricted that whoever takes a step is 'commanded' by all the windows of the primitive hotel and the few villas, and as people have nothing whatever to do but to look at you, you may imagine the perfection of the analysis. I should have been a fly in a microscope, feeling my legs and arms counted

on all sides, and receiving no comfort from the scientific results. So, you see, we 'gave it up' and came here in a sort of despair, meaning to take the railroad to Dieppe; when lo! our examining forces find that the place here is very tenable, and we take a house close to the sea (though the view is interrupted) in a green garden, and quite away from a suggestion of streets and commerce. The bathing is good, we have a post-office and reading-rooms at our elbow, and nothing distracting of any kind. The house is large and airy, and our two families are lodged in separate apartments, though we meet at dinner in our dining-room. Certainly the country immediately around Havre is not pretty, but we came for the sea after all, and the sea is open and satisfactory. Robert has found a hole I can creep through to the very shore, without walking many yards, and there I can sit on a bench and get strength, if so it pleases God.

Have I not sent you a full account of us? Now if you would return me a cent. per cent. — *soll und haben.* I want so much to know all about you — how you feel, dearest friend, and how you are. Do write and tell me of yourself. May God bless you ever and ever.

Your affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Madame Braun

2 Rue de Perry, Le Havre, Maison Versigny:
August 10 [1858].

My dearest Madame Braun, — If you have not heard from me before, it has not been that I have not thought of you anxiously and tenderly, but I had the idea that so many must be thinking of you, and saying to you with sad faces 'they were sorry,' that I kept away, not to be the one too many. It seems so vain when we sympathise with a suffering friend. And yet it is *something* — oh yes, I have felt that! But you *knew* I must feel for you, if I teased you

with words or not; and I, for my part, hearing of you from others, felt shy, as I say, till I heard you were better, of writing to you myself. And you *are* feeling better, Mrs. Jameson tells me, and are somewhat more cheerful about your state. I thank God for this good news. . . .

One of the few reasons for which I regret our absence from England this summer is that I miss seeing you with my own eyes, and I should like much to see you and talk to you of things of interest to both of us. If illness suppresses in us a few sources of pleasure, it leaves the real *ich* open to influences and keen-sighted to *facts* which are as surely *natural* as the fly's wing, though we are apt to consider them vaguely as 'supernatural.'

'More and more life is what we want' Tennyson wrote long ago, and that is the right want. Indifference to life is disease, and therefore not strength. But the life here is only half the apple — a cut out of the apple, I should say, merely meant to suggest the perfect round of fruit — and there is in the world now, I can testify to you, *scientific proof* that what we call death is a mere change of circumstances, a change of dress, a mere breaking of the outside shell and husk. This subject is so much the most interesting to me of all, that I can't help writing of it to you. Among all the ways of progress along which the minds of men are moving, this draws me most. There is much folly and fanaticism, unfortunately, because foolish men and women do not cease to be foolish when they hit upon a truth. There was a man who hung bracelets upon plane trees. But it was a tree — it is a truth — notwithstanding; yes, and so much a truth that in twenty years the probability is you will have no more doubters of the immortality of souls, and no more need of Platos to prove it.

We have come here to dip *me* in warm sea-water, in order to an improvement in strength, for I have been very weak and unwell of late, as perhaps Mrs. Jameson has told you. But the sea and the change have brought me up

again, as I hope they may yourself, and now I am looking forward to getting back to Italy for the winter, and perhaps to Rome.

Did you know Lady Elgin in Paris? She has been hopelessly, in the opinion of her physicians, affected by paralysis, but is now better, her daughter writes to me. A most remarkable person Lady Elgin is. We left her sitting in her garden, not able to speak — to articulate one word — but with one of the most radiant happy faces I ever saw in man or woman. I think I remember that you knew her. Her salon was one of the most agreeable in Paris, and she herself, with her mixture of learning and simplicity, one of the most interesting persons in it. . . .

Dearest Madame Braun, I won't think of the possibility even of your writing to me, so little do I expect to hear. Indeed, I would not write if I considered it would entail writing upon *you*. Only believe that I tenderly regard and think of you, and always shall. May God bless you, my dear friend. Your attached

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

The following letter was written at Paris during the stay there which intervened between leaving Havre and the return to Florence:

To Miss I. Blagden

6 Rue de Castiglione, Place Vendôme, Paris:
October 2 [1858].

My dearest Isa, — I am saddened, saddened by your letter. We both are. Indeed, this last news from India must have struck — I know it did. Still, to your generous nature, long regret for your dear Louisa will be impossible; and you, so given to forget yourself, will come to forget a grief which is only your own. For she was in the world as not of it, in a painful sense; she was cut off from the cheerful, natural development of ordinary human beings;

and if, as was probable, the conviction of this dreary fact had fastened on her mind, the result would have been perhaps demoralising, certainly depressing, more and more. Rather praise God for her therefore, dearest Isa, that she is gone above the cloud, gone where she can exercise active virtues and charities, instead of being the mild patient object of the charities and virtues of her friends. Perhaps she ministers to *you* now instead of being ministered to by you, while the remembrance of her life on earth is tenderly united to you ever, a proof before men and angels that *your* life (whatever you may please to say of yourself) has not been useless, nor barren of good and tender deeds. . . .

In this letter and the last (such depressed letters!) you compare your own fate with that of some others with an injustice which God measures, and which I too have knowledge of. Isa, you speak you know not what. Be sure of one thing, however, that God has not been niggardly towards you, and that He never made a creature for which He did not make the work suited to its hand. He never made a creature necessarily useless, nor gave a life which it was not sin on the creature's part to hold unthankfully and throw back as a poor gift. Your excellent understanding will work clear your spirits presently. Some of those whom you think enviable, if they showed you their secret griefs, unsuspected by you, would leave tears in your eyes for *them*, not *you*. Every heart knows its own bitterness, and God knows when the bitterest drop is necessary for the heart's health. May He bless you, love you, teach you, strengthen you, make you serene and bright in Him, dear, dear Isa. I have spoken as to a sister; I have spoken as to my own soul in an hour of faintness. Let us take courage, Isa.

Dear, I had just folded up your parcel for Miss Alexander that my brother George should take it to-morrow. It has been my first opportunity for England—at least, for London. But now I will carry it back to you. . . .

Arabel stays with me till we go, which will be in a fortnight perhaps from now. We have an apartment in an exquisite situation, two paces from the Tuileries Gardens, first floor, three best bedrooms and two servants' rooms, a closet of a dining-room, a salon — all small, but exquisitely comfortable and Parisian, looking into a court though, and we are not tempted to stay the winter. No; we return to Florence faithfully. Write again, and be happy, Isa; it is as if I said *be good*. Tell me, can it be true that Lytton is in Florence with his mother, as Father Prout assures us on the authority of Lady Walpole? . . .

Write to your ever, in word and deed, loving

BA.

In October the travellers were back in Florence, but this time only for a short stay of some six weeks, since it was decided that Rome would be more suitable to Mrs. Browning's failing health during the winter. On November 24 they reached Rome, and for the next six months were quartered, as in the winter of 1853–4, at No. 43 Via Bocca di Leone. Here it was that they heard the first mutterings of the storm which was to burst during the following year and to result in the making of Italy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Guidi: Saturday [about October 1858].

You do not come, dearest Fanny, though I am here waiting, and I begin to be uneasy about you. Do at least write, do. We have been here since Tuesday, and here is Saturday, and every morning there has been an anxious looking forward for you. . . .

Miss —— wrote to me in Paris to propose travelling with us, which Robert lacked chivalry to accede to; and, in fact, our ways of journeying are too uncertain to admit of arrangements with anyone beyond our circle. For instance,

we took nine days to get here from Paris, spending only one day at Chambéry, for the sake of Les Charmettes and Rousseau. Robert played the 'Dream' on the old harpsichord, the keys of which rattled in a ghastly way, as if it were the bones of him who once so 'dreamed.' Then there was the old watch hung up, without a tick in it. At St. Jean de Maurienne we got into difficulties with diligences, and submitted to being thrown out for the night at Fanclebourg, I more dead than alive, and indeed I suffered much in passing the mountain next morning. Then again, on the sea, we had a *burrasca*, and the captain had half a mind when half-way to Leghorn to turn back to Genoa. Passengers much frightened, including me, a little. A wretched Neapolitan boat, with a machine 'inclined to go to the devil every time the wind went anywhere,' as I heard a French gentleman on board say afterwards. Altogether we were so done up after eighteen hours of it, that we stayed at Leghorn instead of going on straight to Florence. Still, now I seem to have got over fatigue and the rest — and we keep our faces turned undeviatingly to Rome. Mdme. du Quaire having carefully apprised M. Mignaty that we left Paris on the thirteenth, our friends here seem to have made up their minds that we had perished by land or water, and Annunziata's poor sister had passed three days in tears, for instance.

Now, dearest Fanny, let me confess to you. I have not brought the bonnet. A bonnet is a personal matter, and I would not let anyone choose one for *me*. Still, as you had more faith in man (or woman), I would have risked even displeasing you, only Robert would not let me. He said it was absurd — I 'did not know your size;' I 'could not know your taste;' in fact, he would not let me. Perhaps after all it is better. You shall see mine, which is the last novelty, and I will tell you the results of having investigated the bonnet question generally. I was told at a fashionable shop that hats might be worn out of one's teens; but in

Paris let me hasten to add, you don't see hats walking about except on the heads of small girls. In Rome it may be otherwise, as at the seaside it was. Bonnets are a great deal larger, but you shall see.

Oh, so glad I am to be back — so glad, so glad!

And so happy I shall be to see you, dearest Fanny, whom, till now, I have not thanked for the pretty, pretty sketch. I recognised the persons at a glance, you threw into them so much character. . . .

Your ever most affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about November 1858.]

Robert's uncertainty about Rome, my dearest Sarianna, has led him into delay of writing. We dropped here upon summer, and a few days afterwards, just as suddenly, the winter dropped upon *us*. Such wonderful weather, such cold, such snow — enough to strangle one. The rain has come, however, to-day, and though everything feels wretched enough, and I am languid about schemes of travelling, we talk of going next week, should nothing hinder.

'If it be possible
After much grief and pain.'

Peni would rather stay, I believe. His Florence is in his heart still.

Robert will have told you about his bust,[1] which is exquisite in the clay, and will be exhibited in London in the marble next May. The likeness, the poetry, the ideal grace and infantile reality are all there. I am so happy to have it. I set about teasing Robert till he gave it to me, and, as he really loses nothing thereby, I accepted at once, as you

[1] A bust of the child, by Monroe.

may suppose. I would rather have given up Rome and had the bust; but the artist was generous, and would only accept what would cover the expenses, twenty-five guineas. He said he 'would not otherwise do it for us, as he asked in the first place to be allowed to make the sketch in clay, and would not appear to have laid a trap for an order.' So we are all three very happy and grateful to one another — which is pleasant. I feel the most obliged perhaps of the three — obliged to the other two — and ought to be, after the napoleons dropt in Paris, Sarianna!

Oh no; the sea was necessary from Genoa. The expense of the journey would have been very much increased if we had taken the whole way by land, and it was a great thing to escape that rough Gulf of Lyons. The journey to Rome will be rendered easy to Robert's pocket by the extraordinary chance of Mr. Eckley's empty carriage, otherwise the repeated pulls might have pulled us down too low.

Peni will write to you. He loves his nonno and you very much — tell nonno; and my love goes with my message.

May God bless both of you. Love to M. Milsand.

Your affectionate

Ba.

Robert Browning to Miss Browning

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone:
Friday, November 26, 1858 [postmark].

Dearest Sis, — You received a letter written last thing on Wednesday, 18th. We started next day with perfectly fine mild weather and every sort of comfort, and got to our first night's stage, Poggio Bagnoli, with great ease; with the same advantages next day, we passed Arezzo and reached Camuscia, and on Saturday slept at Perugia, having found the journey delightful. Sunday was rainy, but just as mild, so Ba did not suffer at all; we slept at Spoleto. Rain again on Monday. We reached Terni early in the

day in order to go to the Falls, but the thing was impossible for Ba. Eckley, his mother-in-law, and I went, however, getting drenched, but they were fine, the rain and melted snow having increased the waters extraordinarily. On Tuesday we had fine weather again to Civita Castellana; there we found that on the previous day, while we were staying at Terni, a carriage was stopped and robbed in the road we otherwise should have pursued. They said such a thing had not happened for years. On Wednesday afternoon, four o'clock, we reached Rome, with beautiful weather; so it had been for some four out of our seven days. Ba bore the journey irregularly well; of course she has thus had a week of open air, beside the change, which always benefits her. We always had the windows of the carriage open. We passed Wednesday night at an hotel in order to profit by any information friends might be able to furnish, but we ended by returning to the rooms here we occupied before, of which we knew the virtues — a blaze of sun on the front rooms — and absolute healthiness. Rents are enormous; we pay only ten dollars a month more than before, in consideration of the desire the old landlady had to get us again. To anybody else the price would have been 20 more — 60 in all — for which we are to pay 40. The Eckleys took *good rooms* and pay 1,000 (£210 or 15) for six months! One can't do *that*. The best is that they have thoroughly cleaned and painted the place, and everything is very satisfactorily arranged. We take the apartment for four months, meaning to be at liberty to go to Naples if we like. We have no fire this morning while I write, but it is before breakfast and Ba may like the sight of one, tho' I rather think she will not. Rome looks very well, and I hope we shall have a happier time of it than before. Many friends are here and everybody is very kind. The Eckleys were extravagantly good to us, something beyond conception almost. We have seen Miss Cushman, Hatty,[1] Leighton,

[1] Miss Hosmer.

Cartwright, the Storys, Page and his new (third) wife, Gibson, beside the Brackens and Mrs. Mackenzie; and there are others I shall see to-day. Ferdinando was sent on by sea with the luggage, and met us at the gate. It has been an expensive business altogether, but I think we shall not regret it. I daresay you have mild weather at Paris also. These premature beginnings of cold break down and leave the rest of the year the warmer, if not the better for them. Dearest Sis, write and tell me all the news of your two selves. Do you hear anything about Reuben's leaving London? Anything of Lady Elgin? How is Madame Milsand? I will send you the last 'Ath.' I have received, but break off here rather abruptly, in order to let Ba write. Good-bye. God bless you both. Kindest love to Milsand.

Yours ever affectionately

R. B.

E. B. Browning to Miss Browning

My dearest Sarianna,—I don't know whether this letter from Rome will surprise you, but we have done it at last. Our journey was most prosperous, the wonderful inrush of winter which buried all Italy in snow, and for some days rendered the possibility of any change of quarters so more than doubtful (I myself gave it up for days) having given way to an inrush of summer as wonderful. The change was so pleasant that I bore with perfect equanimity the lamentations of certain English acquaintances of ours in Florence, who declared it was the most frightful and dangerous climate that could be, that now one was frozen to death and the next day burnt and melted, and that people couldn't be healthy under such transitions. But all countries of the south are subject to the same of course wherever there is a southern sun, and mountains to retain snow. Even in Paris you complain of something a little like it, because of the sun. We left Florence in a blaze of

sunshine accordingly, and there and everywhere found the country transfigured back into summer, except for two days of April rain. Of the kindness of our dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Eckley I am moved when I try to speak. They humiliate me by their devotion. Such generosity and delicacy, combined with so much passionate sentiment (there is no other word), are difficult to represent. The Americans are great in some respects, not that Americans generally are like these, but that these could scarcely be English — for instance, that mixture of enthusiasm and simplicity we have not. Our journey was delightful and not without some incidents, which might have been accidents. We were as nearly as possible thrown once into a ditch and once down a mountain precipice, the spirited horses plunging on one side, but at last Mr. Eckley lent us his courier, who sate on the box by the coachman and helped him to manage better. Then there was a fight between our oxen-drivers, one of them attempting to stab the other with a knife, and Robert rushing in between till Peni and I were nearly frantic with fright. No harm happened, however, except that Robert had his trousers torn. And we escaped afterwards certain banditti, who stopped a carriage only the day before on the very road we travelled, and robbed it of sixty-two scudi.

Here at Rome we are still fortunate, for with enormous prices rankling around us we get into our old quarters at eleven pounds a month. The rooms are smaller than our ambition would fain climb to (one climbs, also, a little too high on the stairs), but on the whole the quiet healthfulness and sunshine are excellent things, particularly in Rome, and we are perfectly contented. . . .

Rome is so full that I am proceeding to lock up my doors throughout the day. I can't live without some use of life. Here must come the break. May God bless you both. Pen's love with mine to the dear nonno and yourself.

BA.

To Mr. Ruskin

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone: January 1, 1859.

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — There is an impulse upon me to write to you, and as it ought to have come long ago, I yield to it, and am glad that it comes on this first day of a new year to inaugurate the time. It may be a good omen for *me*. Who knows?

We received your letter at Florence and very much did it touch me — us, I should say — and then I would have written if you hadn't bade us wait for another letter, which has not come to this day. Shall I say one thing? The sadness of that letter struck me like the languor after victory, for you who have fought many good fights and never for a moment seemed to despond before, write this word and this. After treading the world down in various senses, you are tired. It is natural perhaps, but this evil will pass like other evils, and I wish you from my heart a good clear noble year, with plenty of work, and God consciously over all to give you satisfaction. What would this life be, dear Mr. Ruskin, if it had not eternal relations? For my part, if I did not believe so, I should lay my head down and die. Nothing would be worth doing, certainly. But I am what many people call a 'mystic,' and what I myself call a 'realist,' because I consider that every step of the foot or stroke of the pen here has some real connection with and result in the hereafter.

'This life's a dream, a fleeting show!' no indeed. That isn't my '*doxy*.' I don't think that nothing is worth doing, but that everything is worth doing — everything good, of course — and that everything which does good for a moment does good for ever, in *art* as well as in morals. Not that I look for arbitrary punishment or reward (the last least, certainly. I would no more impute merit to the human than your Spurgeon would), but that I believe in a perpetual

sequence, according to God's will, and in what has been called a 'correspondence' between the natural world and the spiritual.

Here I stop myself with a strong rein. It is fatal, dear Mr. Ruskin, to write letters on New Year's day. One can't help moralising; one falls on the metaphysical vein unaware.

Forgive me.

We are in Rome you see. We have been very happy and found rooms swimming all day in sunshine, when there is any sun, and yet not ruinously dear. I was able to go out on Christmas morning (a wonderful event for me) and hear the silver trumpets in St. Peter's. Well, it was very fine. I never once thought of the Scarlet Lady, nor of the Mortara case, nor anything to spoil the pleasure. Yes, and I enjoyed it both æsthetically and devotionally, putting my own words to the music. Was it wise, or wrong?

But we have had and are having some cold, some tramontana, and I have kept house ever since. Only in Rome there's always hope of a good warm scirocco. We talk of seeing Naples before we turn home to our Florence, to keep feast for Dante.

It is delightful to hear of all you are *permitted* to do for England meanwhile in matters of art, and one of these days we shall go north to take a few happy hours of personal advantage out of it all. Not this year, however, I think. We have done duty to the north too lately. Now it seems to me we have the right (of virtue, in spite of what I said on another page, or rather, *because* I said it in good human inconsistency), the right to have and hold our Italy in undisturbed possession. I never feel at home anywhere else, or to *live* rightly anywhere else at all. It's a horrible want of patriotism, of course, only, if I were upon trial, I might say in a low voice a few things to soften the judgment against me on account of that sin. Ah! we missed you at Havre! If you had come it would have been something

pleasant to remember that detestable place by, besides the salt-water which profited one's health a little. We were in Paris too some six weeks in all (besides eight weeks at Havre !) and Paris has a certain charm for me always. If we had seen you in Paris ! But no, you must have floated past us, close, close, yet we missed you.

A good happy new year we wish to Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin, as to yourself, and, dear Mr. Ruskin, to your mother I shall say that my child is developing in a way to make me very contented and thankful. Yes, I thank God for him more and more, and *she* can understand that, I know. His musical faculty is a decided thing, and he plays on the piano quite remarkably for his age (through his father's instruction) while I am writing this. He is reading aloud to me an Italian translation of 'Monte Cristo,' and with a dramatic intelligence which would strike you, as it does perhaps, that I should select such a book for a child of nine years old to read at all. It's rather young to be acclimated to French novels, is it not? But the difficulty of getting Italian books is great, and there's a good deal in the early part of 'Monte Cristo,' the prison part, very attractive. His voice was full of sobs when poor Dantes was consigned to the Château d'If. 'Do you mean to say, mama, that *that boy* is to stay there all his life?' He made me tell him 'to make him happy,' as he said.

For the rest he reads French and German, and we shall have to begin Latin in another year I suppose. Do you advise that, you, Mr. Ruskin? He has not given up the drawing neither. Ah ! but there is a weight beyond the post, whatever your goodness may bear, and I must leave a little space for Robert.

May God bless you, my dear friend. Dare I say it? it *came.*

Affectionately yours always,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Robert Browning to Mr. Ruskin

I am to say something, dear Ruskin; it shall be only the best of wishes for this and all other years; go on again like the noble and dear man you are to us all, and especially to us two out of them all. Whenever I chance on an extract, a report, it lights up the dull newspaper stuff wrapt round it and makes me glad at heart and clearer in head. We, for our part, have just sent off a corrected 'Aurora Leigh,' which is the better for a deal of pains, we hope, and my wife deserves. There will be a portrait from a photograph done at Havre without retouching — good, I think. Truest love to you and yours — your father and mother. Do help us by a word every now and then.

Affectionately yours,

R. B.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: January 7 [1859].

My dearest Isa, — Your letter seemed long in coming, as this will seem to you, I fear. I ought to have answered mine at once, and put off doing so from reason to reason, and from day to day. Very busy I have been, sending off seven of the nine books of 'Aurora,'[1] having dizzied myself with the 'ifs' and 'ands,' and done some little good I hope at much cost. . . .

As to the Roman climate, we have had some beautiful weather, but Robert was calling his gods to witness (the goddess Tussis among them) that he never felt it so cold in Florence — never. Fountains frozen, Isa, and the tramontana tremendous. But it can't last — that's the comfort at Rome; and meantime we are housed exquisitely in our lion's mouth; the new *portiere* and universal carpeting keeping it snugger than ever, and the sun over-streaming us through

[1] The fourth edition, in which several alterations were made.

six windows. I have just been saying that whenever I come to Rome I shall choose to come here. The only fault is, the height and the smallness of the rooms; and in spite of the last, we have managed to have and hold twenty people and upwards through a *serata*. Peni has had a bad cold, from over-staying the time on the Pincio one afternoon, and I have kept him in the house these ten days. Such things one may do by one's lion-cubs; but the lions are harder to deal with, and Robert caught cold two or three days ago; in spite of which he chose to get up at six every morning as usual and go out to walk with Mr. Eckley. Only by miracle and nux is he much better to-day. I thought he was going to have a furious grippe, as last year and the year before. I must admit, however, that he is extremely well just now, to speak generally, and that this habit of regular exercise (with occasional homœopathy) has thrown him into a striking course of prosperity, as to looks, spirits, and appetite. He eats 'vulpinely' he says — which means that a lark or two is no longer enough for dinner. At breakfast the loaf perishes by Gargantuan slices. He is plunged into gaieties of all sorts, caught from one hand to another like a ball, has gone out every night for a fortnight together, and sometimes two or three times deep in a one night's engagements. So plenty of distraction, and no Men and Women. Men and women from without instead! I am shut up in the house of course, and go to bed when he goes out — and the worst is, that there's a difficulty in getting books. Still, I get what I can, and stop up the chinks with Swedenborg; and in health am very well, for me, and in tranquillity excellently well. Not that there are not people more than enough who come to see me, but that there is nothing vexatious just now; life goes smoothly, I thank God, and I like Rome better than I did last time. The season is healthy too (for Rome). I have only heard of one English artist since we came, who arrived, sickened, died, and was buried, before anyone knew who he was. Besides

ordinary cases of slight Roman fever among the English, Miss Sherwood (who with her father was at Florence) has had it slightly, and Mrs. Marshall who came to us from Tennyson. (A Miss Spring-Rice she was.) But the poor Hawthornes suffer seriously. Una is dissolved to a shadow of herself by reiterated attacks, and now Miss Shepherd is seized with gastric fever. Mr. Hawthorne is longing to get away — where, he knows not.

My Peni has conquered his cold, and when the weather gets milder I shall let him out. Meanwhile he has taken to — what do you suppose? I go into his room at night and find him with a candle regularly settled on the table by him, and he reading, deeply rapt, an Italian translation of 'Monte Cristo.' Pretty well for a lion-cub, isn't it? He is enchanted with this book, lent to him by our padrona; and exclaims every now and then, 'Oh, magnificent, magnificent!' And this morning, at breakfast, he gravely delivered himself to the following effect: 'Dear mama, for the future I mean to read *novels*. I shall read all Dumas's, to begin. And then I shall like to read papa's favourite book, "Madame Bovary."' Heavens, what a lion-cub! Robert and I could only answer by a burst of laughter. It was so funny. That little dot of nine and a half full of such hereditary tendencies.

And 'Madame Bovary' in a course of education! . . .

May God bless you, my-much-loved Isa, for this and other years beyond also. I shall love you all that way — says the genius of the ring.

Your ever loving

BA.

CHAPTER X

1859–1860

At this point in Mrs. Browning's correspondence we reach the first allusion to the political crisis which had now become acute, and of which the letters that follow are full, almost to excess. On January 1 Napoleon had astounded Europe by his language to the Austrian ambassador at Paris, in which he spoke of the bad relations unfortunately subsisting between their States. On the 10th Victor Emmanuel declared that he must listen to the cry of pain which came up to him from all Italy. After this it was clear that there was nothing to do but to prepare for war. It was in vain that England pressed for a European Congress, with the view of arranging a general disarmament. Sardinia professed willingness to accept it, but Austria declined, and on April 23 sent an ultimatum to Victor Emmanuel, demanding unconditional disarmament, which was naturally refused. On the 29th Austria declared war, and her troops crossed the Ticino — an act which Napoleon had already announced would be considered as tantamount to a declaration of war with France.

With regard to the tone of Mrs. Browning's letters during this period of politics and war, there are a few considerations to be borne in mind. Her two deepest political convictions were here united in one — her faith in the honesty of Louis Napoleon, and her enthusiasm for Italian freedom and unity. There were many persons in England, and some in Italy

itself, who held the latter of these faiths without the former; but for such she had no tolerance. Hence not only those who sympathised, as no doubt some Englishmen did sympathise, with Austria, but also those who, while wishing well to Italy, looked with suspicion upon Napoleon's interference, incurred her uncompromising wrath; and not even the conference of Villafranca, not even the demand for Nice and Savoy, could lead her to question Napoleon's sincerity, or to look with patience on the English policy and English public opinion of that day. The instinct of Italians has been truer. They have recognised the genuine sympathy and support which England extended to them on many occasions during the long struggle for Italian unity, and the friendship between the two countries to-day has its root in the events of forty and fifty years ago.

That Robert Browning did not entirely share his wife's views will be clear to all readers of 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau;' but there is not the smallest sign that this caused the least shadow of disagreement between them. Indeed for the moment the difference was practically annulled, since Robert Browning believed, what was very probably the case, that the Emperor's friendship for Italy was genuine, so far as it went. But it may be believed that he was less surprised than she when Napoleon's zeal for Italian independence stopped short at the frontiers of Venetia, and was transformed into an anxiety to get out of the war without further risk, and with an eye to material compensation in Savoy and Nice.

It is also right to bear in mind the failing condition of Mrs. Browning's health. The strain of anxiety unquestionably overtaxed her strength, and probably told upon her mental tone in a way that may account for much that seems exaggerated, and at times even hysterical, in her expressions regarding those who did not share her views. Her errors were noble and arose from a passionate nobility of character, to which much might be forgiven, if there were much to forgive.

To Miss Browning

Rome: [about February 1, 1859].

I am sure Robert has been too long about writing this time, dearest Sarianna. It did not strike either of us till this morning that it was so long. We have all been well; and Robert is whirled round and round so, in this most dissipated of places (to which Paris is really grave and quiet), that he scarcely knows if he stands on his feet or his head. . . .

Since Christmas Day I have been out twice, once to see Mr. Page's gorgeous picture (just gone to Paris), and once to run back again before the wind; but I am too susceptible. The weather has been glorious to everybody with some common sense in their lungs. And to-day it is possible even to *me*, they say, and I am preparing for an effort.

Pen is quite well and rosy. Still we hear of illness, and I am very particular and nervous about him. All Mr. Hawthorne's family have been ill one after another, and now he is struck himself with the fever.

Let me remember to say how the professor's letter seemed to say so much — too much.

Particularly just now. I for one can receive no compliments about 'English honesty,' &c., after the ignoble way we are behaving about Italy. I dare say dear M. Milsand (who doesn't sympathise much with our Italy) thinks it 'imprudent' of the Emperor to make this move, but that it is generous and magnanimous he will admit. The only great-hearted politician in Europe — but chivalry always came from France. The emotion here is profound — and the terror, among the priests.

Always I expected this from Napoleon, and, if he will carry out his desire, Peni and I are agreed to kneel down and kiss his feet. The pamphlet which proceeds from him is magnificent. I said it long ago — to Jessie White I said it,

'You would destroy,' said I, 'the only man who has it in his heart and head to do anything for Italy.'

Most happily Robert's and my protestation went to America in time; just before the present contingency. Yes, Jessie should not have permitted our names to be used so. Being passive even was a fault — yes, and more than a fault.

Robert is in great spirits and very well indeed. . . .

Ever your most affectionate,

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: March 27, [1859].

My ever dearest Isa, — You don't write, not you! I wrote last, remember, and though you may not have liked all the politics of the same, you might have responded to some of the love, you naughty Isa; so I think I shall get up a 'cause célèbre' for myself (it shall be my turn now), and I shall prove (or try) that nobody has loved me (or can) up to this date of the 26th of March, 1859. Dearest Isa, seriously speaking, you must write, for I am anxious to know that you are recovering your good looks and proper bodily presence as to weight. Just now I am scarcely of sane mind about Italy. It even puts down the spirit-subject. I pass through cold stages of anxiety, and white heats of rage. Robert accuses me of being 'glad' that the new 'Times' correspondent has been suddenly seized with Roman fever. It is I who have the true fever — in my brain and heart. I am chiefly frightened lest Austria yield on unimportant points to secure the vital ones; and Louis Napoleon, with Germany and England against him, is in a very hard position. God save us all.

Massimo d' Azeglio[1] has done us the real honor of coming to see us, and seldom have I, for one, been more

[1] Prime Minister of Piedmont from 1849–52, and one of the most honourable and patriotic of Italian statesmen.

gratified. A noble chivalrous head, and that largeness of the political *morale* which I find nowhere among statesmen, except in the head of the French Government. Azeglio spoke bitterly of English policy, stigmatised it as belonging to a past age, the rags of old traditions. He said that Louis Napoleon had made himself great simply by comprehending the march of civilisation (the true Christianity, said Azeglio) and by leading it. Exactly what I have always thought. Azeglio disbelieves in any aim of territorial aggrandisement on the part of France. He is full of hope for Italy. It is '48 over again, said he, but with matured actors. He finds a unity of determination among the Italians wherever he goes.

Well, Azeglio is a man. Seldom have I seen a man whom I felt more sympathy towards. He has a large, clear, attractive 'sphere,' as we Swedenborgians say.

The pamphlet Collegno never reached us. The Papal Government has snatched it on the way. Farini's is very good. Thank you for all your kindness as to pamphlets (not letters, Isa! I distinguish in my gratitude). We lent Mr. Trollope's to Odo Russell,[1] the English plenipotentiary, and to Azeglio, so that it has produced fruit in our hands.

Did I write since Robert dined with the Prince of Wales? Col. Bruce called here and told me that though the budding royalty was not to be exposed to the influences of mixed society, the society of the most eminent men in Rome was desired for him, and he (Col. Bruce) knew it would 'gratify the Queen that the Prince should make the acquaintance of Mr. Browning.' Afterwards came the invitation, or 'command.' I told Robert to set them all right on Italian affairs, and to eschew compliments, which, you know, is his weak point. (He said the other day to Mrs. Story: 'I had a delightful evening yesterday at your house. I *never spoke to you once*,'

[1] Subsequently English ambassador at Berlin, and one of the plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Congress of 1878. Created Lord Ampthill in 1881, and died in 1884.

and encouraged an artist, who was 'quite dissatisfied with his works,' as he said humbly, by an encouraging — 'But, my dear fellow, if you were satisfied, you would be so *very easily* satisfied!' Happy! wasn't it?) Well, so I exhorted my Robert to eschew compliments and keep to Italian politics, and we both laughed, as at a jest. But really he had an opportunity, the subject was permitted, admitted, encouraged, and Robert swears that he talked on it higher than his breath. But, oh, the English, the English! I am unpatriotic and disloyal to a *crime*, Isa, just now. Besides which, as a matter of principle, I never put my trust in princes, except in the parvenus.

Not that the little prince here talked politics. But some of his suite did, and he listened. He is a gentle, refined boy, Robert says. . . .

May God bless you, dearest Isa. I am, your very loving,

BA.

To Miss Browning

Rome: [about April 1859].

Dearest Sarianna, — People are distracting the 'Athenæums,' Robert complains, as they distract other things, but in time you will recover them, I hope. Mr. Leighton has made a beautiful pencil-drawing, highly finished to the last degree, of him;[1] very like, though not on the poetical side, which is beyond Leighton. Of this you shall have a photograph soon; and in behalf of it, I pardon a drawing of me which I should otherwise rather complain of, I confess.

We are all much saddened just now (in spite of war) by the state of Una Hawthorne, a lovely girl of fifteen, Mr. Hawthorne's daughter, who, after a succession of attacks of Roman fever, has had another, complicated with gastric, which has fallen on the lungs, and she only lives from hour to hour. Homœopathic treatment persisted in, which never answers in these fevers. Ah — there has been much illness

[1] Now in the possession of Mr. R. Barrett Browning.

in Rome. Miss Cushman has had an attack, but you would not recognise other names. We are well, however, Pen like a rose, and Robert still expanding. Dissipations decidedly agree with Robert, there's no denying that, though he's horribly hypocritical, and 'prefers an evening with me at home,' which has grown to be a kind of dissipation also.

We are in great heart about the war, as if it were a peace, without need of war. Arabel writes alarmed about our funded money, which we are not likely to lose perhaps, precisely because we are *not* alarmed. The subject never occurred to me, in fact. I was too absorbed in the general question — yes, and am.

So it dawns upon you, Sarianna, that things at Rome and at Naples are not quite what they should be. A certain English reactionary party would gladly make the Pope a *paratonnerre* to save Austria, but this won't do. The poor old innocent Pope would be paralytically harmless but for the Austrian, who for years has supported the corruptions here against France; and even the King of Naples would drop flat as a pricked bubble if Austria had not maintained that iniquity also. We who have lived in Italy all these years, know the full pestilent meaning of Austria everywhere. What is suffered in Lombardy *exceeds what is suffered elsewhere.* Now, God be thanked, here is light and hope of deliverance. Still you doubt whether the French are free enough themselves to give freedom! Well, I won't argue the question about what 'freedom' is. We shall be perfectly satisfied here with French universal suffrage and the ballot, the very same democratical government which advanced Liberals are straining for in England. But, however that may be, the Italians are perfectly contented at being liberated by the French, and entirely disinclined to wait the chance of being more honourably assisted by their 'free' and virtuous friend on the other side of the hedge (or channel), who is employed at present in buttoning up his own pockets lest peradventure he should lose a shilling:

giving dinners though, and the smaller change, to 'Neapolitan exiles,' whom only this very cry of 'war' has freed.

Robert and I have been of one mind lately in these things, which comforts me much. But the chief comfort is — the state of facts.

Massimo d'Azeglio came to see us, and talked nobly, with that noble head of his. I was far prouder of his coming than of another personal distinction you will guess at, though I don't pretend to have been insensible even to that. 'It is '48 over again,' said he, 'with matured actors.' In fact, the unity throughout Italy is wonderful. What has been properly called 'the crimes of the Holy Alliance' will be abolished this time, if God defends the right, which He will, I think. I have faith and hope.

But people are preparing to run, and perhaps we shall be forced to use the gendarmes against the brigands (with whom the country is beset, as in all cases of general disturbance) when we travel, but this is all the difference it will make with us. Tuscany is only restraining itself out of deference to France, and not to complicate her difficulties. War must be, if it is not already.

Yes, I was 'not insensible,' democratical as I am, and un-English as I am said to be. Col. Bruce told me that 'he knew it would be gratifying to the Queen that the Prince should make Robert's acquaintance.' 'She wished him to know the most eminent men in Rome.' It might be a weakness, but I was pleased.

Pen's and my love to the dearest Nonno and you.

Your affectionate

Ba.

In May, shortly after the outbreak of war, the Brownings returned to Florence, whither a division of French troops had been sent, under the command of Prince Napoleon. The Grand Duke had already retired before the storm, and a provisional government had been formed. It was here that

they heard the news of Magenta (June 4) and Solferino (June 24), with their wholly unexpected sequel, the armistice and the meeting of the two Emperors at Villafranca. The latter blow staggered even Mrs. Browning for the moment, but though her frail health suffered from the shock, her faith in Louis Napoleon was proof against all attack. She could not have known the good military reasons he had for not risking a reversal of the successes which he had won more through his enemy's defects than through the excellence of his own army or dispositions; but she found an explanation in the supposed intrigues of England and Germany, which frustrated his good intentions.

To Miss Browning

Florence: [about May 1859].

My dearest Sarianna, — You will like to hear, if only by a scratch, that we are back in Tuscany with all safety, after a very pleasant journey through an almost absolute solitude. Florence is perfectly tranquil and at the same time most unusually animated, what with the French troops and the passionate gratitude of the people. We have two great flags on our terrace, the French flag and the Italian, and Peni keeps a moveable little flag between them, which (as he says) 'he can take out in the carriage sometimes.' Pen is enchanted with the state of things in general, and the French camp in particular, which he came home from only in the dusk last night, having 'enjoyed himself so very much in seeing those dear French soldiers play at blind-man's buff.' They won't, however, remain long here, unless the Austrians threaten to come down on us, which, I trust, they will be too much absorbed to do. The melancholy point in all this is the dirt eaten and digested with a calm face by England and the English. Now that I have exhausted myself with indignation and protestation, Robert has taken up the same note, which is a comfort. I would

rather hear my own heart in his voice. Certainly it must be still more bitter for him than for me, seeing that he has more national predilections than I have, and has struggled longer to see differently. Not only the prestige, but the very respectability of England is utterly lost here — and nothing less is expected than her ultimate and open siding with Austria in the war. If she does, we shall wash our hands like so many Pilates, which will save us but not England.

We are intending to remain here as long as we can bear the heat, which is not just now too oppressive, though it threatens to be so. We must be somewhere near, to see after our property in the case of an Austrian approach, which is too probable, we some of us think; and I just hear that a body of the French will remain to meet the contingency. Our Italians are fighting as well as soldiers can.

Tell M. Milsand, with my love, that if I belonged to his country, I should feel very proud at this time. As to the Emperor, he is sublime. He will appear so to all when he comes out of this war (as I believe) with clean and empty hands. . . .

Robert gives ten scudi a month (a little more than two guineas) to the war as long as it lasts, and Peni is to receive half a paul every day he is good at his lessons, that he also may give to the great cause. I must write a word to the dear nonno. May God bless both of you, says your

Affectionate Sister,

BA.

To Mr. Browning, Senior

[Same date.]

Yes, indeed, I missed the revolution in Tuscany, dearest Nonno, which was a loss — but perhaps, in compensation (who knows?), I shall be in for an Austrian bombardment or brigandage, or something as good or bad. But, after all, you are not to be anxious about us because of a jest of mine. We have Tuscan troops on the frontier, and French

troops in the city, and although the Duchess of Parma has graciously given leave, they say, to the Austrians to cross her dominions in order to get into Tuscany, we shall be well defended. We are all full of hope and calm, and never doubt of the result. If ever there was a holy cause it is this; if ever there was a war on which we may lawfully ask God's blessing, it is this. The unanimity and constancy of the Italian people are beautiful to witness. The affliction of ten years has ripened these souls. Never was a contrast greater than what is to-day and what was in '48. No more distrust, nor division, nor vacillation, and a gratitude to the French nation which is quite pathetic.

Peni is all in a glow about Italy, and wishes he was 'great boy enough' to fight. Meantime he does his lessons for the fighters — half a paul a day when he is good.

Mr. del Bene thought him much improved in his music, and I hope he gets on in other things, and that when we bring him back to you (crowned with Italian laurels), you will think so too. Meanwhile think of us and love us, dearest Nonno. I always think of your kindness to me.

Your ever affectionate Daughter,

Ba.

To Mr. Ruskin

Casa Guidi: June 3, [1859].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — We send to you every now and then somebody hungry for a touch from your hand; we who are famished for it ourselves. But this time we send you a man whom you will value perfectly for himself and be kind to from yourself, quite spontaneously. He is the American artist, Page, an earnest, simple, noble artist and man, who carries his Christianity down from his deep heart to the point of his brush. Draw him out to talk to you, and you will find it worth while. He has learnt much from Swedenborg, and used it in his views upon art. Much of it (if new) may sound to you wild and dreamy — but the dream

will admit of logical inference and philosophical induction, and when you open your eyes, it is still there.

He has not been successful in life — few are who are uncompromising in their manner of life. When I speak of life, I include art, which is life to him. I should like you to see what a wonder of light and colour and space and breathable air, he puts into his Venus rising from the sea — refused on the ground of nudity at the Paris Exhibition this summer. The loss will be great to him, I fear.

You will recognise in this name *Page*, the painter of Robert's portrait which you praised for its Venetian colour, and criticised in other respects. In fact, Mr. Page believes that he has discovered Titian's secret — and, what is more, he will tell it to you in love, and indeed to anybody else in charity. So I don't say that to bribe you.

Dear, dear Mr. Ruskin, we thank you and love you more than ever for your good word about our Italy. Oh, if you knew how hard it is and has been to receive the low, selfish, ignoble words with which this great cause has been pelted from England, not from her Derby government only, but from her parliament, her statesmen, her reformers, her leaders of the Liberal party, her free press — to receive such words full in our faces, nay, in the quick of our hearts, till we grow sick with loathing and hot with indignation — if you knew what it was and is, you would feel how glad and grateful we must be to have a right word from John Ruskin. Dear Mr. Ruskin, England has done terribly ill, ignobly ill, which is worse. That men of all parties should have spoken as they have, proves a state of public morals lamentable to admit. What — not even our poets with clean hands? Alfred Tennyson abetting Lord Derby? That to me was the heaviest blow of all.

Meanwhile we shall have a free Italy at least, for everything goes well here. Massimo d' Azeglio came to see us in Rome, and he said then, 'It is '48 with matured actors.' Indeed, there is a wonderful unanimity, calm, and resolution

everywhere in Italy. All parties are broken up into the one great national party. The feeling of the people is magnificent. The painful experience of ten years has borne fruit in their souls. No more distrust, no more division, no more holding back, no more vacillation. And Louis Napoleon — well, I think he is doing me credit — and you, dear Mr. Ruskin — for *you*, too, held him in appreciation long ago. A great man.

I beseech you to believe on my word (and we have our information from good and reliable sources), that the 'Times' newspaper built up its political ideas on the broadest foundation of *lies*. I use the bare word. You won't expel it, in the manner of the Paris Exhibition, for its nudity — lies — not mistakes. For instance, while the very peasants here are giving their crazie, the very labourers their day's work (once a week or so) — while everyone gives, and every man almost (who can go) goes — the 'Times' says that Piedmont had derived neither paul nor soldier from Tuscany. Tell me what people get by lying so? Faustus sold himself to the Devil. Does Austria pay a higher price, I wonder?

Such things I could tell you — things to moisten your eyes — to wring that burning eloquence of yours from your lips. But Robert waits to take this letter. Penini has adorned our terrace with two tricolour flags, the Italian tricolour and the French. May God bless you, dear friend. Speak again for Italy. If you could see with what *eyes* the Italian speaks of the 'English.' Our love to you, Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin — if we may — because we must. Write to us, do.

Ever affectionately yours,

R. B. and E. B. B.

To Miss Browning

Florence: [about June 1859].

My dearest Sarianna, — There is a breath of air giving one strength to hold one's pen at this moment. How

people can use swords in such weather it's difficult to imagine. We have been melting to nothing, like the lump of sugar in one's tea, or rather in one's lemonade, for tea grows to be an abomination before the sun. The heat, which lingered unusually, has come in on us with a rush of flame for some days past, suggesting, however, the degree beyond itself, which is coming. We stay on at Florence because we can't bear to go where the bulletin twice a day from the war comes less directly; and certainly we shall stay till we can't breath here any more. On which contingency our talk is to go somewhere for two months. Meanwhile we stay.

You can't conceive of the intense interest which is reigning here, you can't realise it, scarcely. In Paris there is vivid interest, of course, but that is from less immediate motives, except with persons who have relations in the army. Here it is as if each one had a personal enemy in the street below struggling to get up to him. When we are anxious we are pale; when we are glad we have tears in our eyes. This 'unnecessary' and 'inexcusable' war (as it has been called in England) represents the only hope of a nation agonising between death and life. You *talk* about our living or dying, but *we live or die*. That's the difference between you and us.

We shall live, however. The hope is rising into triumph. Nobody any more will say that the Italians fight ill. Remember that Garibaldi has with him simply the *volunteers* from all parts of Italy, not the trained troops. He and they are heroic (as with such conviction and faith they were sure to be), and the trained troops not less so. 'Worthy of fighting side by side with the French,' says the Emperor; while the French are worthy of their fame. 'The great military power' crumbles before them, because souls are stronger than bodies always. There is no such page of glory in the whole history of France. Great motives and great deeds. The feeling of profound gratitude to Napoleon

III., among this people here, is sublime from its unanimity and depth. . . .

All this excitement has made Florence quite unlike its quiet self, in spite of the flight of many residents and nearly all travellers. Even we have been stirred up to wander about more than our custom here. There's something that forbids us to sit at home; we run in and out after the bulletins, and to hear and give opinions; and then, in the rebound, we have been caught and sent several times to the theatre (so unusual for us) to see the great actor, Salvini, who is about to leave Florence. We saw him in 'Othello' and in 'Hamlet,' and he was very great in both, Robert thought, as well as I. Only his houses pine, because, as he says, the 'true tragedies spoil the false,' and the Italians have given up the theatres for the cafés at this moment of crisis. . . .

In best love,

BA.

After Villafranca the immediate anxiety for news from the seat of war naturally came to an end, and the Brownings were able to escape from the heat of Florence to Siena, where they remained about three months.

To Miss Browning

Siena: [July–August 1859].

Dearest Sarianna, — This to certify that I am alive after all; yes, and getting stronger, and intending to be strong before long, though the sense left to me is of a peculiar frailty of being; no very marked opinion upon my hold of life. But life will last as long as God finds it useful for myself and others — which is enough, both for them and me.

So well I was with all the advantages of Rome in me,

looking so well, that I was tired of hearing people say so. But though it may sound absurd to you, it was the blow on the *heart* about the peace after all that excitement and exultation, that walking on the clouds for weeks and months, and then the sudden stroke and fall, and the impotent rage against all the nations of the earth — selfish, inhuman, wicked — who forced the hand of Napoleon, and truncated his great intentions. Many young men of Florence were confined to their beds by the emotion of the news. As for me, I was struck, couldn't sleep, talked too much, and (the intense heat rendering one more susceptible, perhaps) at last this bad attack came on. Robert has been perfect to me. For more than a fortnight he gave up all his night's rest to me, and even now he teaches Pen. They are well, I thank God. We stay till the end of September. Our Italians have behaved magnificently, steadfast, confident, never forgetting (except in the case of individuals, of course) their gratitude to France nor their own sense of dignity. Things must end well with such a people. Few would have expected it of the Italians. I hear the French ambassador was present at the opening of the Chambers the other day at Florence, which was highly significant.

I suppose you are by the sea, and I hope you and the dearest nonno are receiving as much good from air and water as you desired. May God bless you both.

Your ever affectionate Sister,

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

Villa Alberti, Siena: Wednesday [July–August 1859].

My ever dearest, kindest Isa, — I can't let another day go without writing just a word to you to say that I am alive enough to love you. In fact, dear, I am a great deal better; no longer ground to dust with cough; able to sleep at

nights; and preparing to-day to venture on a little minced chicken, which I have resisted all the advances of hitherto. This proves my own opinion of myself, at least. I am extremely weak, reeling when I ought to walk, and glad of an arm to steer by. But the attack is over; the blister to the side, tell Dr. Gresonowsky, conquered the uneasiness there, and did me general good, I think. Now I have only to keep still and quiet, and do nothing useful, or the contrary, if possible, and not speak, and not vex myself more than is necessary on politics. I had a letter from Jessie Mario, dated Bologna, the other day, and feel a little uneasy at what she may be about there. It was a letter not written in very good taste, blowing the trumpet against all Napoleonists. Most absurd for the rest. Cavour had promised L. N. Tuscany for his cousin as the price of his intervention in Italy; and Prince Napoleon, finding on his arrival here that it 'wouldn't do,' the peace was made in a huff.

Absurd, certainly.

Robert advises me not to answer, and it may be as well, perhaps.

I dreamed lately that I followed a mystic woman down a long suite of palatial rooms. She was in white, with a white mask, on her head the likeness of a crown. I knew she was Italy, but I couldn't see through the mask. All through my illness political dreams have repeated themselves, in inscrutable articles of peace and eternal provisional governments. Walking on the mountains of the moon, hand in hand with a Dream more beautiful than them all, then falling suddenly on the hard earth-ground on one's head, no wonder that one should suffer. Oh, Isa, the tears are even now in my eyes to think of it!

And yet I have hope, and the more I consider, the more I hope.

There will be no intervention to interfere with us in Tuscany, and there is something *better behind*, which we none of us see yet.

We read to-day of the Florence elections. May God bless my Florence.

Dearest Isa, don't you fancy that you will get off with a day and night here. No, indeed. Also, I would rather you waited till I could talk, and go out, and enjoy you properly; and just now I am a mere rag of a Ba hung on a chair to be out of the way.

Robert is so very kind as to hear Pen's lessons, which keeps me easy about the child.

Heat we have had and have; but there's a great quantity of air — such blowings as you boast of at your villa — and I like this good open air and the quiet. I have seen nobody yet. . . .

Dearest Isa, I miss you, and love you. How perfect you are to me always.

Robert's true love, with Pen's. And I may send my love to Miss Field, may I not?

Yours, in tender affection,

Ba.

Do write, and tell me everything.

Yes, England will do a little dabbling about constitutions and the like where there's nothing to lose or risk; and why does Mrs. Trollope say 'God bless them' for it? *I* never will forgive England the most damnable part she has taken on Italian affairs, never. The pitiful cry of 'invasion' is the continuation of that hound's cry, observe. Must we live and bear?

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 24, 1859 [postmark].

Dearest Fanny, — This is only to say that I wrote to you before your letter reached me, directing mine simply to the post-office of Cologne, and that I write now lest what went before should miss for want of the more specific address. Thank you, dear friend, for caring to hear of my health;

that, at least, *is* pleasant. I keep recovering strength by air, quiet, and asses' milk, and by hope for Italy, which consolidates itself more and more.

You will wonder at me, but these public affairs have half killed me. You know I *can't* take things quietly. Your complaint and mine, Fanny, are just opposite. For weeks and weeks, in my feverish state, I never closed my eyes without suffering 'punishment' under eternal articles of peace and unending lists of provisional governments. Do you wonder?

Observe — I believe entirely in the Emperor. He did at Villafranca what he could not help but do. Since then, he has simply changed the arena of the struggle; he is walking under the earth instead of on the earth, but *straight* and to unchanged ends.

This country, meanwhile, is conducting itself nobly. It is worthy of becoming a great nation.

And God for us all!

So you go to England really? Which I doubted, till your letter came.

It is well that you did not spend the summer here, for the heat has been ferocious; hotter, people from Corfu say, than it was ever felt there. Italy, however, is apt to be hottish in the summer, as we know very well.

The country about here, though not romantic like Lucca, is very pretty, and our windows command sunsets and night winds. I have not stirred out yet after three weeks of it; you may suppose how reduced I must be. I could scarcely *stand* at one time. The active evil, however, is ended, and strength comes somehow or other. Robert has had the perfect goodness not only to nurse me, but to teach Peni, who is good too, and rides a pony just the colour of his curls, to his pure delight. Then we have books and newspapers, English and Italian — the books from Florence — so we do beautifully.

Mr. Landor is here. There's a long story. Absolute

revolution and abdication from the Florence villa. He appeared one day at our door of Casa Guidi, with an oath on his soul never to go back. The end of it all is, that Robert has accepted office as Landor's guardian (! !) and is to 'see to him' at the request of his family in England; and there's to be an arrangement for Wilson to undertake him in a Florence apartment, which she is pleased at. He visits the Storys, who are in a villa here (the only inhabitants), and were very kind to him. Now he is in rooms in a house not far from us, waiting till we return to Florence. I have seen him only once, and then he looked better than he did in Florence, where he seemed dropping into the grave, scarcely able to walk a hundred yards. He longs for England, but his friends do not encourage his return, and so the best that can be done for him must be. Now he is in improved spirits and has taken to writing Latin alcaics on Garibaldi, which is refreshing, I suppose.

Ask at the post-office for my letter, but don't fancy that it may be a line more lively than this. No alcaics from me! One soul has gone from me, at least, the soul that writes letters.

May God bless you, dearest, kindest Fanny. Love me a little. Don't leave off feeling 'on private affairs' too much for *that*.

Robert's best love with that of your loving

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 26 [1859].

Dearest friend, what have you thought of me?

I was no more likely to write to you about the 'peace' than about any stroke of personal calamity. The peace fell like a bomb on us all, and for my part, you may still find somewhere on the ground splinters of my heart, if you look hard. But by the time your letter reached me we had

recovered the blow *spiritually*, had understood that it was necessary, and that the Emperor Napoleon, though forced to abandon one arena, was prepared to carry on the struggle for Italy on another.

Therefore I should have answered your letter at once if I had not been seized with illness. Indeed, my dear, dear friend, you will hear from me no excuses. I have not been unkind, simply incapable.

I believe it was the violent mental agitation, the reaction from a state of exultation and joy in which I had been walking among the stars so many months; and the grief, anxiety, the struggle, the talking, all coming on me at a moment when the ferocious heat had made the body peculiarly susceptible; but one afternoon I went down to the Trollopes, had sight of the famous Ducal orders about bombarding Florence, and came home to be ill. Violent palpitations and cough; in fact, the worst attack on the chest I ever had in Italy. For two days and two nights it was more like *angina pectoris*, as I have heard it described; but this went off, and the complaint ran into its ancient pattern, thank God, and kept me *only* very ill, with violent cough all night long; my poor Robert, who nursed me like an angel, prevented from sleeping for full three weeks. When there was a possibility I was lifted into a carriage and brought here; stayed two days at the inn in Siena, and then removed to this pleasant airy villa. Very ill I was after coming, and great courage it required to come; but change of air was absolutely a condition of living, and the event justified the risk. For now I am quite myself, have done crying 'Wolf,' and end this lamentable history by desiring you to absolve me for my silence. We have been here nearly a month. My strength, which was so exhausted that I could scarcely stand unsupported, is coming back satisfactorily, and the cough has ceased to vex me at all. Still, I am not equal to driving out. I hope to take my first drive in a very few days though, and the very asses

are ministering to me — in milk. All the English physicians had found it convenient (the beloved Grand Duke being absent) to leave Florence, and Zanetti was attending the Piedmontese hospitals, so that I had to attend me none of the old oracles — only a Prussian physician (Dr. Gresonowsky), a very intelligent man, of whom we knew a little personally, and who had a strong political sympathy with me. (He and I used to sit together on Isa Blagden's terrace and relieve ourselves by abusing each other's country; and whether he expressed most moral indignation against England or I against Prussia, remained doubtful.) Afterwards he came to cure me, and was as generous in his profession as became his politics. People are usually very kind to us, I must say. Think of that man following us to Siena, uninvited, and attending me at the hotel two days, then refusing recompense.

Well, now let me speak of our Italy and the peace. 'Immoral,' you say? Yes, immoral. But not immoral on the part of Napoleon who had his hand forced; only immoral on the part of those who by infamies of speech and intrigue (in England and Germany), against which I for one had been protesting for months, brought about the complicated results which forced his hand. Never was a greater or more disinterested deed intended and almost completed than this French intervention for Italian independence; and never was a baser and more hideous sight than the league against it of the nations. Let me not speak.

For the rest, if it were not for Venetia (Zurich[1] keeps its secrets so far) the peace would have proved a benefit rather than otherwise. We have had time to feel our own strength, to stand on our own feet. The vain talk about Napoleon's intervening militarily on behalf of the Grand Duke has

[1] The conferences for the arrangement of the final treaty of peace were held at Zurich.

simply been the consequence of statements without foundation in the English and German papers; and also in some French Ultramontane papers. Napoleon with his own lips, *after the peace*, assured our delegates that no force should be used. And he has repeated this on every possible occasion. At Villafranca, when the Emperor of Austria insisted on the return of Dukes, he acceded, on condition they were recalled. He 'did not come to Italy to dispossess the sovereigns,' as he had previously observed, but to give the power of election to the people. Before we left Rome this spring he had said to the French ambassador, 'If the Tuscans like to recall their Grand Duke, *qu'est-ce que cela me fait?*' He simply said the same at Villafranca.

Count de Reiset was sent to Florence, Modena, and Parma, to '*constater*,' not to '*impose*,' and the whole policy of Napoleon has been to draw out a calm and full expression of the popular mind. Nobly have the people of Italy responded. Surely there is not in history a grander attitude than this assumed by a nation half born, half constituted, scarcely named yet, but already capable of self-restraint and dignity, and magnanimous faith. We are full of hope, and should be radiant with joy, except for Venetia.

Dearest friend, the war did more than 'give a province to Piedmont.' The first French charge *freed Italy potentially* from north to south. At this moment Austria cannot stir anywhere. Here 'we live, breathe, and have our national being.' Certainly, if Napoleon did what the 'Times' has declared he would do — intervene with armed force against the people, prevent the elections, or *tamper* with the elections by means of — such means as he was 'familiar' with; if he did these things, I should cry aloud, 'Immoral, vile, a traitor!' But the facts deny all these imputations. He has walked steadily on along one path, and the development of Italy as a nation is at the end of it.

Of course the first emotion on the subject of the peace

was rage as well as grief. For one day in Florence all his portraits and busts disappeared from the shop windows; and I myself, to Penini's extreme disgust (who insisted on it that his dear Napoleon couldn't do anything wrong, and that the fault was in the telegraph), wouldn't let him wear his Napoleon medal. Afterwards — as Ferdinando said — 'Siamo stati un po' troppo furiosi davvero, signora;' *that* came to be the general conviction. Out came the portraits again in the sun, and the Emperor's bust, side by side with Victor Emmanuel's, adorns the room of our 'General Assembly.' There are individuals, of course, who think that through whatever amount of difficulty and complication, he should have preserved his first programme. But these are not the wiser thinkers. He had to judge for France as well as for Italy. As Mr. Trollope said to me in almost the first fever, 'It is upon the cards that he has acted in the wisest and most conscientious manner possible for all, — or it is on the cards etc.'

The difficulty now is at Naples.

There will be a Congress, of course. A Congress was in the first programme; after the war, a Congress.

But, dearest Mona Nina, if you want to get calumniated, hated, lied upon, and spat upon (in a spiritual sense), try and do a good deed from disinterested motives in this world. That's my lesson.

I have been told upon rather good authority that Cavour's retirement is simply a feint, and that he will recover his position presently.

What weighs on my heart is Venetia. Can they do anything at Zurich to modify that heavy fact?

You see I am not dead yet, dear, dearest friend. And while alive at all, I can't help being in earnest on these questions. I am a Ba, you know. Forgive me when I get too much 'riled' by your England.

You will know by this time that the 'proposition' you approved of was French.

What made the very help of Prussia unacceptable to Austria was the circumstance of Prussia's using that opportunity of Austria's need to wriggle herself to the military headship of the Confederation. Austria would rather have lost Lombardy (and more) than have accepted such a disadvantage. Hence the coldness, the cause of which is scarcely avowable. Selfish and pitiful nations!

Dear Isa Blagden writes me all the political news of Florence. She is well, and will come to pay us a visit before long. We remain here till September ends, and then return to Casa Guidi.

I had a letter from Bologna from Jessie, which threw me into a terror lest the Mazzinians should come to Italy just in time to ruin us. The letter (not unkind to me) was as contrary to facts and reason as possible. I was too ill to write at the time, and Robert would not let me answer it afterwards.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Martin

Villa Alberti, Siena: September [1859].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — As you talk of palpitations and the newspapers, and then tell me or imply that you are confined for light and air to the 'Times' on the Italian question, I am moved with sympathy and compassion for you, and anxious not to lose a post in answering your letter. My dear, dear friends, I beseech you to believe *nothing* which you have read, are reading, or are likely to read in the 'Times' newspaper, unless it contradicts all that went before. The criminal conduct of that paper from first to last, and the immense amount of injury it has occasioned in the world, make me feel that the hanging of the Smethursts and Ellen Butlers would be irredeemable cruelty while these writers are protected by the Law. . . .

Of course you must feel perplexed. The paper takes up different sets of falsities, quite different and contradictory, and treats them as facts, and writes 'leaders' on them, as if they were facts. The reader, at last, falls into a state of confusion, and sees nothing clearly except that somehow or other, for something that he has done or hasn't done, has intended or hasn't intended, Louis Napoleon is a rascal, and we ought to hate him and his.

Well, leave the 'Times' — though from the 'Times' and the like base human movements in England and Germany resulted, more or less directly, that peace of Villafranca which threw us all here into so deep an anguish, that I, for one, have scarcely recovered from it even to this day.

Let me tell you. We were living in a glow of triumph and gratitude; and for me, it seemed to me as if I walked among the angels of a new-created world. All faces at Florence shone with one thought and one love. You can scarcely realise to yourself what it was at that time. Friends were more than friends, and strangers were friends. The rapture of the Italians — their gratitude to the French, the simple joy with which the French troops understood (down to the privates) that they had come to deliver their brothers, and to go away with empty hands; all these things, which have been calumniated and denied, were wonderfully beautiful. Scarcely ever in my life was I so happy. I was happy, not only for Italy, but for the world — because I thought that this great deed would beat under its feet all enmities, and lift up England itself (at last) above its selfish and base policy. Then, on a sudden, came the peace. It was as if a thunderbolt fell. For one day, every picture and bust of the Emperor vanished, and the men who would have died for him, before that sun, half articulated a curse on his head. But the next day we were no longer mad, and as the days past, we took up hope again, and the more thoughtful among our politicians began to understand the situation. There was, however, a painful change. Before, difference of

opinion was unknown, and there was no sort of anxiety (a doubt of the result of the war never crossing anyone's mind). Napoleon in the thickest of the fire, with one epaulette shot off, was a symbol intelligible to the whole population. But when he disappeared from the field and entered the region of spirits and diplomats — when he walked under the earth instead of on the surface — though he walked with equal loyalty and uprightness, then people were sanguine or fearful according to their temperament, and the English and Austrian newspapers attributing the worst motives and designs, troubled the thoughts of many. Still, both the masses (with their blind noble faith), and the leaders with their intelligence, held fast their hopes, and the consequence has been the magnificent spectacle which this nation now offers to Europe, and which for dignity, calm, and unanimous determination may seek in vain for its parallel in history. Now we are very happy again, full of hope and faith. . . .

We shall probably go to Rome again for the winter, as Florence is considered too cold. There will be disturbances that way in all probability; but we are bold as to such things. The Pope is hard to manage, even for the Emperor. It is hard to cut up a feather bed into sandwiches with the finest Damascus blade, but the end will be attained somehow. I wish I could see clearly about Venetia. There are intelligent and thoughtful Italians who are hopeful even for Venetia, and certainly, the Emperor of Austria's offer to Tuscany (not made to the Assembly, as the 'Times' said, but murmured about by certain agents) implies a consciousness on his part of holding Venetia, with a broken *wrist* at least.

As to the Duchies never for a moment did I believe in armed intervention. Napoleon distinctly with his own lips promised our delegates, after the peace, and before he left Italy, that he would neither do it nor permit it. And afterwards, in Paris, again and again. He accepted the Austrian

proposition under the condition simply that the Dukes were recalled by the people, not in defiance of the popular will. He has been loyal throughout both to Austria and to Italy, and to his own original programme, which did not contemplate dispossessing sovereigns but freeing peoples.

Italy for the Italians — and so it will be. For Prince Napoleon, when he was in Florence he might have remained there and delighted everybody. I *know* even that a person high in office felt the way towards a proposal of the kind, and that he answered in a manner considered too '*tranchant*,' 'No, no, *that* would suit neither the Emperor nor England; et pour moi, je ne le voudrais pas.' He used every opportunity at that time of advising the fusion, about which people were much less unanimous than they are now.

But calumny never dies (*like me!*). Mr. Russell, Lord John's nephew, the quasi-minister at Rome, very acute, and liberal too (by the English standard) being on his road to Rome from London last week proposed paying us a visit, and we had him here two days (in a valuable spare room!). He told me that Napoleon had been too *fin* for the English Government. He had *induced them to acknowledge the Tuscan vote* (observe that fact, dearest friends) induced them to acknowledge the Tuscan vote; and now here was his game. He had forbidden Piedmont to accept the fusion,[1] and therefore Piedmont must refuse. The consequence of which would be that there must be another vote in Tuscany, which would favor Prince Napoleon, and that we, having accepted the first vote, must accept the second, the Emperor throwing up his hands and crying, '*Who would have thought it?*'

We told him that he and the English Government were so far out in their conclusions, that Piedmont, instead of refusing, would accept conditionally; but he sighed, 'hoped

[1] Of Tuscany with Piedmont, which was voted by Tuscany in August. Modena, Parma, and Romagna did the same, and so made the critical step towards the creation of an united Italy.

it might be so,' in the way in which preposterous opinions are civilly put away.

Scarcely was he gone, when the conditional acceptance was known.

How much more I could tell you. But one can't write all. The first battle in the north of Italy freed Italy *potentially* from north to south. Our political life here in the centre is a proof of this. The conduct of the Italians is admirable, but last year they *could not* have assumed this attitude. They were a bound people. And even now, if the Emperor removed his hand from Austria, we should have the foreign intervention, and no hope.

We are ready and willing to fight, observe. The 'Times' may take back its words. But to oppose the whole Austrian Empire with our unorganised, however heroic, forces, is impossible. We might *die*, indeed. . . .

May God bless both of you always. I have pretty good letters from home. Home! what's home?

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Read 'La Foi des Traités;' it is from the hand of Louis Napoleon. So that I was prepared for the amnesty and for what follows.

The following letters to Mr. Chorley relate to Mrs. Browning's poem 'A Tale of Villafranca,' which was published in the 'Athenæum' for September 24, and subsequently included in the volume of 'Poems before Congress' (*Poetical Works*, iv. 195).

To Mr. Chorley

Villa Alberti, Siena: September 12, [1859].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — This isn't a *letter*, as you will see at a glance. I should have written to you long since, and have also sent this poem (which solicits a place in the 'Athenæum') if I had not been very ill and been very slow in getting well. We wanted to answer your kind letter, and shall. As for my poem, be so good as to see it put in, in spite of its good and true politics, which you 'Athenæum' people (being English) will dissent from altogether. Say so, if you please, but let me in. 'Strike, but hear me.' I have been living and dying for Italy lately. You don't know how vivid these things are to us, which serve for conversation at London dinner parties.

Ah — dear Mr. Chorley. The bad news about poor Lady Arnould will have affected you as it did Robert a few days ago. I do pity so our unhappy friend, Sir Joseph. Tell us, if you can and will, what you hear.

We came here from Florence five or six weeks since, when I was very unfit for moving, but change of air and a cooler air and repose had grown necessary. We are at a villa two miles from Siena, where we look at scarlet sunsets, over purple hills, and have the wind nearly all day. Mr. and Mrs. Story are half a mile off in another villa, and Mr. Landor at a stone's cast. Otherwise the solitude is absolute. Mr. Russell spent two days with us on his way to resume office at Rome. I should remember that. . . .

To Mr. Chorley

Siena: Sunday [September–October 1859].

Thank you, my dear Mr. Chorley, I submit gratefully to being snubbed for my politics. In return I will send to your private ear an additional stanza which should interpose

as the real *seventh* but was left out. I did not send it to you the day after my note, though sorely tempted to do so, because it seemed to me likely to annul any small chance of 'Athenæum' tolerance which might fall to me. Would it have done so, do you think?

> 'A great deed in this world of ours!
> Unheard of the pretence is.
> It plainly threatens the Great Powers;
> Is fatal in all senses.
> A just deed in the world! Call out
> The rifles! . . . be not slack about
> The National Defences.'

Certainly if I don't guess 'the Sphinx' right, some of your English guessers in the 'Times' and elsewhere fail also, as events prove. The clever 'Prince-Napoleon-for-Central-Italy' guess,[1] for instance, has just fallen through, by declaration of the 'Moniteur.' Most absurd it was always. At one time the Prince might have taken the crown by acclamation. He was almost *rude* about it when he was in Tuscany. And even after the peace, members of the present Government were not averse, were much the contrary indeed. At that time the autonomy was still dear, we had not made up our minds to the fusion. Now, *è altra cosa*, and to imagine that a man like the French Emperor would have waited till now, producing, by the opportunities he has given, the present complication, *in order* to impose the Prince, is absurd on the very face of it.

While standers-by guess, the comfort is that circumstances ripen. We are in spirits about our Italy. The dignity, the constancy, the calm, are admirable, as the unanimity of the people is wonderful. Even the contadini have rallied to the Government, and the cry of enthusiasm to

[1] It was supposed that Napoleon contemplated constituting Central Italy, or at least Tuscany, into a kingdom for his brother Jerome, and that it was for this reason that the latter had been sent to Florence with a French corps at the beginning of the war.

which the cross of Savoy was uncovered in the market place of Siena yesterday was a thrilling thing. Also we will fight, be it understood, whenever fighting shall be necessary. At present, the right arm of Austria is broken; she cannot hold the sword since Solferino, at least in central Italy. Let those who doubt our debt to France, remember where we were last year, and see what our political life is now — real, vivid, unhindered! Our moral qualities are our own, but our practical opportunities come from another; we could not have made them by force of moral qualities, great as those are allowed to be. And how striking the growth of this people since 1848. Massimo d'Azeglio said to Robert and me, 'It is '48 over again with matured actors.' But it is even more than that: it is '48 over again with regenerated actors.

All internal jealousies at an end, all suspicions quenched, all selfish policies dissolved. Florence forgets herself for Italy. This is grand. Would that England, that pattern of moral nations, would forget herself for the sake of something or someone beyond. *That* would be grand.

I wish you were here, my dear Mr. Chorley, since I am wishing in vain, though we are almost at the close of our stay in this pretty country. We have a villa with beautiful sights from all the windows; and there, on the hill opposite, live Mr. and Mrs. Story, and within a stone's throw, in a villino, lives the poor old lion Landor, who, being sorely buffeted by his family at Fiesole, far beyond 'kissing with tears' (though Robert did what he could), took refuge with us at Casa Guidi one day, broken-hearted and in wrath. He stays here while we stay, and then goes with us to Florence, where Robert has received the authorisation of his English friends to settle him in comfort in an apartment of his own, with my late maid, Wilson (who married our Italian man-servant), to take care of him; and meanwhile the quiet of this place has so restored his health and peace of mind, that he is able to write awful Latin alcaics, to say nothing of hexameters and pentameters, on the

wickedness of Louis Napoleon. Yes, dear Mr. Chorley, poems which might appear in the 'Athenæum' without disclaimer, and without injury to the reputation of that journal.

Am I not spiteful? I assure you I couldn't be spiteful a short time ago, so very ill I have been. Now it is different, and every day the strength returns. What remains, however, is a certain necessity of not facing the Florence wind this winter, and of going again to Rome, in spite of probable revolutions there. We talk of going in the early part of November. Why won't you come to Rome and give us meeting? Foolish speech, when I know you won't. We shall be in Florence probably at the end of the present week, to stay there until the journey further south begins. I shall regret this silence. And little Penini too will have his regrets, for he has been very happy here, made friends with the contadini, has helped to keep the sheep, to run after straggling cows, to play at '*nocini*' (did you ever hear of that game), and to pick the grapes at the vintage — driving in the grape-carts (exactly of the shape of the Greek chariots), with the grapes heaped up round him; and then riding on his own pony, which Robert is going to buy for him (though Robert never spoils him; no, not he, it is only *I* who do that!), galloping through the lanes on this pony the colour of his curls. I was looking over his journal (Pen keeps a journal), and fell on the following memorial which I copy for you — I must.

'This is the happiest day of my hole (*sic*) life, for now dearest Vittorio Emanuele is really *nostro re*.'

Pen's weak point does not lie in his politics, Mr. Chorley, but in his spelling. When his contadini have done their day's work he takes it on him to read aloud to them the poems of the revolutionary Venetian poet Dall' Ongaro, to their great applause. Then I must tell you of his music. He is strong in music for ten years old — and plays a sonata of Beethoven already (in E flat — opera 7) and the first four books of Stephen Heller; to say nothing of

various pieces by modern German composers in which there is need of considerable execution. Robert is the maestro, and sits by him two hours every day, with an amount of patience and persistence really extraordinary. Also for two months back, since I have been thrown out of work, Robert has heard the child all his other lessons. Isn't it very, very good of him?

Do write to us and tell me how your sister is, and also how you are in spirits and towards the things of the world? Give her my love — will you?

I had a letter some time ago from poor Jessie Mario, from Bologna. Respect her. She hindered her husband from fighting with Garibaldi for his country, because Garibaldi fought under L. N., which was so highly improper. Her letter was not unkind to me, but altogether and insanely wrong as I considered. (Not more wrong though, and much less wicked, than the 'Times.') I was too ill at the time to answer it, and afterwards Robert would not let me, but I should have liked to do it; it's such a comfort to a woman (and a man?) to *sfogarsi*, as we say here. Also, I was really uneasy at what might be doing at Bologna; so in spite of friendship, it was a relief to me to hear of the police taking charge of all overt possibilities in that direction.

Is it really true that Adam Bede is the work of Miss Evans? The woman (as I have heard of her) and the author (as I read her) do not hold together. May God bless you, my dear friend. Robert shall say so for himself.

Ever affectionately yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

My dear Mr. Chorley, — Reading over what I have written I find that I have been so basely ungrateful as not to say the thing I would when I would thank you. Your *Dedication* will be accepted with a true sense of kindness and honor together; I shall be proud and thankful. But perhaps you have changed your mind in the course of this long silence.

And now where's room for Robert?

To Miss I. Blagden

Villa Alberti, [Siena]:
Tuesday [September–October, 1859].

Ever dearest Isa, — Yes, I am delighted.

Evviva il nostro re! It isn't a very distinct acceptance, however, but as distinct as could be expected reasonably.[1] Under conditions, of course.

On Friday morning before noon up to our door came Mr. Russell's carriage. He had closed with Robert's proposition at once, and we made room for him without much difficulty, and were very glad to see him. I didn't go in to dinner, and he and Robert went to the Storys in the evening — so that it wasn't too much for me — and then I really like him — he is refined and amiable, and acute and liberal (as an Englishman can be), full of 'traditions' or prejudices, to use the right word. To my surprise he *knew* scarcely anything; and, as I modestly observed to Robert, 'didn't understand the Italian question half as well as I understand it.' Of course there was a quantity of gossip in the anti-Napoleon sense; how the Emperor told the King of the peace over the soup, twirling his moustache; and how the King swore like a trooper at the Emperor in consequence; and how the Emperor took it all very well — didn't mind at all — and how, and how — things which are manifestly impossible and which Robert tells me I ought not to repeat, in order not to multiply such vain tales. There is Metternich the younger (ambassador in Paris), a personal friend of Odo Russell's, in whose bosom Louis Napoleon seems to pour the confidences of his heart about that '*coquin de Cavour* who led him into the Italian war,'

[1] Napoleon being opposed to the idea of an united Italy, Victor Emmanuel did not consider it wise to accept the proffered crown of Central Italy while a French army was still in the country and the terms of peace were not finally settled.

&c. &c., but it simply proves to you and me how an Austrian can lie, which we could guess before.

My *facts* are these: First, Ferdinando IV.[1] has an ambassador in Rome, who has been received officially by the Pope (!!) ('The coolest thing that ever was'), and is paid out of the private purse of the Royal Highness. There is another ambassador at Naples, and another at Vienna — on the same terms; so let no one talk of 'Déchéance.'

Then let me tell you what Mr. Russell said to me. 'Napoleon,' said he, 'has been too *fin* for the English Government. He made us acknowledge the Tuscan vote. Now he has strictly forbidden Piedmont to accept, and Piedmont must therefore refuse. The consequences of which will be that there must be another vote in Tuscany, by which Prince Napoleon will be elected; and we, having acknowledged the first vote, must acknowledge the second.'

Of course I protested; disbelieved in the forbidding, and believed in the accepting. He 'hoped it might be so' — in the civil way with which people put away preposterous opinions — and left us on Saturday night at ten, just too late to hear of the 'fait accompli.'

Out of all *that*, I rescue my fact that *Napoleon made the English Government acknowledge the Tuscan vote.*

Don't let Kate put any of this into American papers, because Mr. Russell was our guest, observe, and spoke trustingly to us. He had just arrived from England, and went on to Rome without further delay.

The word *Venice* makes my heart beat. Has Guiducci any grounds for hope about Venice? If Austria could be *bought* off at any price! Something has evidently been promised at Villafranca on the subject of Venice; and evidently the late strengthening of the hands of Piedmont

[1] The new Duke of Tuscany. He had succeeded to this now very shadowy throne on July 21 of this year.

will render the Austrian occupation on any terms more and more difficult and precarious.

I should agree with you on Prince Napoleon, if it were not that I want the Emperor's disinterestedness to remain in its high place. We can't spare great men and great deeds out of the honour of the world. There are so few.

For the rest, the Prince would have been a popular and natural choice at one time, and as far as central Italy was concerned. Also he is very liberal in opinion, and full of ideas, I have been told.

But the fusion is a wiser step *now*, and altogether — even if we could spare the Emperor's fame. Do you remember the obloquy he suffered for Neufchâtel? and how it came out that, if he pressed his conditions, it was simply because he meant to fight for the independence of the State? and how at last the Swiss delegates went to Paris to offer their gratitude for the deliverance he had attained for the people? His loyalty will come out clean before the eyes of his enemies now as then. We agree absolutely. And Robert does not dissent, I think. Facts begin to be conclusive to him.

You are an angel, dearest Isa, with the tact of a woman of the world. This in reference to the note you sent me, and your answer. You could not have done better — not at all.

Our kind love to Kate — and mind you give our regards to Dr. Gresonowsky. Also to Mr. Jarves — poor Mr. Jarves — how sorry I am about the pictures!

Robert will write another time, he says, 'with kindest love.'

To Miss Browning

[Siena: September–October, 1859.]

My dearest Sarianna, — We are on the verge of returning to Florence, for a short time — only to pack up, I believe, and go further south — to 'meet the revolution,' tell the

dearest Nonno, with my love. The case is that though I am really convalescent and look well (Robert has even let me take to Penini a little, which is conclusive), it is considered dangerous for me to run the risk of even a Florence winter. You see I have been *very* ill. The physician thought there was pressure of the lungs on the *heart*, and, under those circumstances, that I *must* avoid irritation of the lungs by any cold. Say nothing which can reach my sisters and frighten them; and after all I care very little about doctors, except that I do know myself how hard renewals of the late attack would go with me. But I mean to take care, and use God's opportunities of getting strong again. Also it seems to me that I have taken a leap within these ten days, and that the strength comes back in a fuller tide. After all, it is not a cruel punishment to us to have to go to Rome again this winter, though it will be an undesirable expense, and though we did wish to keep quiet this winter, the taste for constant wanderings having passed away as much for me as for Robert. We begin to see that by no possible means can one spend as much money to so small an end. And then we don't work so well — don't live to as much use, either for ourselves or others. Isa Blagden bids us observe that we pretend to live at Florence, and are not there much above two months in the year, what with going away for the summer and going away for the winter. It's too true. It's the drawback of Italy. To live in one place here is impossible for us almost, just as to live out of Italy at all is impossible for us. It isn't caprice — that's all I mean to say — on our part.

Siena pleases us very much. The silence and repose have been heavenly things to me, and the country is very pretty, though no more than pretty — nothing marked or romantic, no mountains (did you fancy us on the mountains?) except so far off as to be like a cloud only, on clear days, and no water. Pretty, dimpled ground, covered with low vineyards; purple hills, not high, with the sunsets clothing

them. But I like the place, and feel loth to return to Florence from this half-furnished villa and stone floors. The weather is still very hot, but no longer past bearing, and we are enjoying it, staying on from day to day. Robert proposed Palermo instead of Rome, but I shrink a little from the prospect of our being cut up into mincemeat by patriotic Sicilians, though the English fleet (which he reminds me of) might obtain for you and for England the most 'satisfactory compensation' of the pecuniary kind. At Rome I shall not be frightened, knowing my Italians. Then there will be more comfort, and, besides, no horrible sea-voyage. Some Americans have told us that the Mediterranean is twice as bad as the Atlantic. I always thought it *twice as bad as anything*, as people say elegantly. We shall not leave Florence till November. Robert must see W. Landor (his adopted son, Sarianna) settled in his new apartment, with Wilson for a duenna. It's an excellent plan for him, and not a bad one for Wilson. He will pay a pound (English) a week for his three rooms, and she is to receive twenty-two pounds a year for the care she is to take of him, besides what is left of his rations. Forgive me if Robert has told you this already. Dear darling Robert amuses me by talking of his 'gentleness and sweetness.' A most courteous and refined gentleman he is, of course, and very affectionate to Robert (as he ought to be), but of self-restraint he has not a grain, and of suspiciousness many grains. Wilson will run certain risks, and I for one would rather not meet them. What do you say to dashing down a plate on the floor when you don't like what's on it? And the contadini at whose house he is lodging now have been already accused of opening desks. Still, upon that occasion (though there was talk of the probability of Landor's throat being 'cut in his sleep'), as on other occasions, Robert succeeded in soothing him, and the poor old lion is very quiet on the whole, roaring softly, to beguile the time, in Latin alcaics against his wife and Louis Napoleon. He laughs

carnivorously when I tell him that one of these days he will have to write an ode in honour of the Emperor, to please *me*.

Little Pen has been in the utmost excitement lately about his pony, which Robert is actually going to buy for him. I am said to be the spoiler, but mark! I will confess to you that, considering how we run to and fro, it never would have entered into the extravagance of my love to set up a pony for Penini. When I heard of it first, I opened my eyes wide, only no amount of discretion on my part could enable me to take part against both Pen and Robert in a matter which pleases Pen. I hope they won't combine to give me an Austrian daughter-in-law when Peni is sixteen. So I say 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'Certainly,' and the pony is to be bought, and carried to Rome (fancy that!), and we are to hunt up some small Italian princes and princesses to ride with him at Rome (I object to Hatty Hosmer, who has been thrown thirty times).[1] In fact, Pen has been very coaxing about the pony. He has beset Robert in private and then, as privately, entreated me, 'if papa spoke to me about the pony, not to *discourage* him.' So I discouraged nobody, but am rather triumphantly glad, upon the whole, that we have done such a very foolish, extravagant thing.

Robert will have told you, I am sure, what a lovely picture Mr. Wilde the American artist (staying with the Storys) has made of Penini on horseback, and presented to me. It is to be exhibited in the spring in London, but before then, either at Rome or Florence, we will have a photograph made from it to send you. By the way, Mr. Monroe failed us about the photograph from the bust. He said he had tried in vain once, but would try again. The child is no less pretty and graceful than he was, and he rides, as he does everything, with a grace which is striking. He gallops like the wind, and with an absolute fearlessness — he who is timid about sleeping in a room by himself, poor darling.

[1] Not on account of bad riding, be it observed, but of daring and venturesome riding.

He has had a very happy time here (besides the pony) having made friends with all the contadini, who adore him, and helped them to keep the sheep, catch the stray cows, drive the oxen in the grape-carts, and to bring in the vintage generally, besides reading and expounding revolutionary poems to them at evening. The worst of it was, while it lasted, that he ate so many grapes he could eat nothing else whatever. Still, he looks rosy and well, and there's nothing to regret. . . .

Robert has let his moustache and beard grow together, and looks very picturesque. I thought I should not like the moustache, but I do. He is in very good looks altogether, though, in spite of remonstrances, he has given up walking before breakfast, and doesn't walk at any time half enough. *I* was in fault chiefly, because he both sate up at night with me and kept by me when I was generally ill in the mornings. So I oughtn't to grumble — but I do. . . . Love to dear M. Milsand. We are in increasing spirits on Italian affairs.

Your very affectionate

BA.

In October they returned to Florence, though only for about six weeks, before moving on to Rome for the winter.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Florence]: Casa Guidi: Friday [October 1859].

Ever dearest Mona Nina,— Here we are at our Florence, very thankful for the advantages of our Siena residence. God has been kind. When I think how I went away and how I came back, it seems to me wonderful. For the latter fortnight the tide of life seemed fairly to set in again, and now I am quite well, if not as strong — which, of course, could not be in the time. My doctor opened his eyes to see me yesterday so right in looks and ways. But we spend the winter in Rome, because the great guns of the revolu-

tion (and even the small daggers) will be safer to encounter than any sort of tramontana. To tell you the truth, dearest friend, there have been moments when I have 'despaired of the republic' — that is, doubted much whether I should ever be quite well again; I mean as tolerably well as it is my normal state to be. So severe the attack was altogether.

As to political affairs, I will use the word of Penini's music-master when asked the other day how they went on — '*Divinamente*,' said he. Things are certainly going *divinamente*. I observe that, while politicians by profession, by the way, have various opinions, and hope and fear according to their temperaments, *the people* here are steadily sanguine, distrusting nobody if it isn't a Mazzinian or a codino, and looking to the end with a profound interest, of course, but not any inquietude. '*Divinamente*' things are going on.

There is an expectation, indeed, of fighting, but only with the Pope's troops (and we all know what a '*soldato del papa*' means), or with such mongrel defenders as can be got up by the convicts of Modena or Tuscany to give us an occasion of triumph presently. The expected outburst in Sicily and the Neapolitan states will simply extend the movement. That's *our* way of thinking and hoping. May God defend the right!

Mr. Probyn, a Liberal M.P., has come out here to appreciate the situation, and said last night that, after visiting the north of Italy and speaking with the chiefs, he is full of hope. Not quite so is Cartwright, whom you know, and who came to us at Siena. But Mr. Cartwright exceeds Dr. Cumming in the view of Napoleon, who isn't antichrist to him, but is assuredly the devil. I like Mr. Cartwright, observe, but I don't like his modes of political thinking, which are 'after the strictest sect' and the reddest tape English. He and his family are gone to Rome, and find the whole city 'to be hired.' Family men in general are not likely to go there this winter, and we shall find the

coast very clear. And *you* — dearest friend, you seem to have given up Italy altogether this winter. Unless you come to Rome, we shall not be the better for your crossing the Alps. The Eckleys have settled in Florence till next year. The Perkinses also. Isa Blagden is at her villa, which, if she lets, she may pay Miss Cushman a visit in Rome towards the spring, but scarcely earlier.

After the dreary track of physical discomfort was passed, I enjoyed Siena much, and so did Robert, and the next time we have to spend a summer in Tuscany we shall certainly turn our faces that way. When able to drive, I drove about with Robert and enjoyed the lovely country; and once, on the last day, I ventured into the gallery and saw the divine Eve of Sodoma for the second time. But I never entered the cathedral — think of that! There were steps to be mounted. But I have the vision of it safe within me since nine years ago. The Storys, let me remember to tell you gratefully, were very kind and very delicate, offering all kindnesses I could receive, and no other. . . .

Did I tell you that Jessie Mario had written to me from Romagna? You know, in any case, that she and her husband were arrested subsequently and sent into Switzerland. The other day I had two printed letters from the newspaper 'Evening Star,' enclosed to me by herself or her brother, I suppose — one the production of her husband, and one of Brofferio the advocate. I thought both were written in a detestable spirit, attempting to throw an odium on the governments of Central Italy, which they should all three have rather died in their own poor personal reputations than have wished to hazard under present circumstances. Mazzini and his party have only to keep still, if *indeed* they do *not* desire to swamp the great Italian cause. Every movement made by them is a gain to Austria — a clear gain. Every word spoken by them, even if it applaud us, goes against the cause! Whoever has a conscience among them, let him consider this and be still. . . .

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Guidi: November 2 [1859].

My dearest Fanny, — I this moment receive your letter, and hasten to answer it lest I should be too late for you in Paris. Dear Fanny, you seem in a chronic transitional state; it's always *crisis* with you. I can't *advise;* but I do rather *wonder* that you don't go at once to England and see your friends till you can do your business. . . . You can get at pictures in England and at artistic society also if you please; and making a *slancio* into Germany or to Paris would not be impossible to you occasionally.

Does this advice sound *too* disinterested on my part? Never think so. We only stand ourselves on one foot in Florence — forced to go away in the summer; forced to go away in the winter. Robert was so persuaded even last winter (before my illness) of my being better at Rome that he would have taken an apartment there and furnished it, except that I prevented him. Then we have calls from the north, and on most summers we must be in England and Paris. To stay on through the summer in Florence is impossible to us at least. Think of thermometers being a hundred and two in the shade this year! So I consider your case dispassionately, and conclude *we* are not worth your consideration in reference to prospects connected with any place. We are rolling stones gathering no moss. There's no use for anyone to run after us; but we may roll anyone's way. I say this, penetrated by your affectionate feeling for us. May God bless you and keep you, my dear friend.

As for me, I have been nearly as ill as possible — that's the truth — suffering so much that the idea of the evil's recurrence makes me feel nervous. All the Italians who came near me gave me up as a lost life; but God would not have it so this time, and my old vitality proved itself

strong still. At present I am remarkably well; I had a return of threatening symptoms a fortnight ago, but they passed. I think I had been talking too much. Now I feel quite as free and well as usual about the chest, and 'buoyant' as to general spirits. Affairs in Italy seem going well, and Napoleon does not forget us, whatever his townsfolk of a certain class may do. The French newspapers remember us well, I am happy to see, also. But, my dear Fanny, who am I to give letters to Garibaldi? I don't know him, nor does he know *me*. Have you acquaintance with Madame Swartz? *She* could help Mr. Spicer. But she has just gone to Rome. And *we* are going to Rome. Did not Sarianna tell you that? We go on my account to avoid the tramontana here. People say we are foolhardy on account of the state of the country; but you are aware we are no more frightened of revolutions than M. Charles is of the tiger. Prices at Rome will be more reasonable at any rate. Nobody pays high for a probability of being massacred. What I'm most afraid of after all is lest the 'Holiness of our Lord' should agree to reform at the last moment. It's too late; it must be too late — it ought to be too late. . . .

Poor Mr. Landor is in perfect health and in rather good spirits, seeming reconciled to his fate of exile. In the summer he moaned over it sadly, 'never could be happy except in England;' and I rather leant to sending him back, I confess. But Mr. Forster and other friends seemed to think that if he went back he could never be kept from the attack, all would come over again; and really that was probable. Still, I feared for him before he went to Siena. It does not do to shake hour-glasses at his age, and though he had been acclimated here by an eleven years' residence, still — well; there was nothing for it but to keep him here. He sighs a little still that it 'does not agree with him,' and that Florence is a 'very ugly town,' and so on; but still he is evidently much stronger than when he went to Siena, can walk for an hour together (instead of failing at the end of

the street), and looks quite vigorous with his snow-white beard and moustache, through which the carnivorous laugh runs and rings. He doesn't know yet we are going away. He will miss Robert dreadfully. Robert's goodness to him has really been apostolical. And think of the effect of a goodness which can quote at every turn of a phrase something from an author's book! Isn't it more bewitching than other goodnesses? To certain authors, that is. . . .

Dearest Fanny, keep up your spirits, *do*. Write to me to say you are less sad. And love not less your

Affectionate

BA.

To Mr. Chorley

Casa Guidi: November 25 [1859].

My dear Friend, — I thank you with all my heart for your most graceful and touching dedication,[1] and do assure you that I feel it both as honour and as pleasure.

And yet, do you know, Robert says that you might peradventure, by the dedication of your book to me, mean a covert lecture, or sarcasm, who knows? Even if you did, the kindness of the personal address would make up for it. Who wouldn't bear both lecture and sarcasm from anyone who begins by speaking *so?* Therefore I am honoured and pleased and grateful all the same — yes, and *will* be.

But, dear Mr. Chorley, you don't silence me, notwithstanding. The spell of your dedication hasn't fastened me up in an oak for ever. Your book is very clever; your characters very incisively given; princess and patriots admirably cut out (and up!); half truths everywhere, to which one says 'How true!' But one might as well (and better) say 'How false!' seeing that, dear Mr. Chorley, it does really take two halves to make a whole, and we know

[1] Mr. Chorley had dedicated his last novel, *Roccabella*, to Mrs. Browning.

it. The whole truth is not here — not even suggested here — and let me add that the half truth on this occasion is cruel.

One thing is ignored in the book. Under all the ridiculousness, under all the wickedness even of such men and women, lies *a cause*, a right inherent, a wrong committed. The cant presupposes a doctrine, and the pretension a real heroism. Your best people (in your book) seem to have no notion of this. Your heroine deserves to be a victim, not because she was rash and ignorant, but because she was selfish and foolish. The world wasn't lost for her because she loved — either a cause or a man — but because she wanted change and excitement. If she had felt on the abstract question as I have known women to feel, even when they have acted like fools, I should pity her more. As it is, the lesson was necessary. If she had not married rashly an Italian *birbante* she would have married rashly an English blackguard, and I myself see small difference in the kinds. With *you*, however, to your mind, it is different; and in this view of yours seems to me to lie the main fault of your book. You evidently think that God made only the English. The English are a peculiar people. Their worst is better than the best of the exterior nations. Over the rest of the world He has cast out His shoe. Even supposing that a foreigner does, by extraordinary exception, some good thing, it's only in reaction from having murdered somebody last year, or at least left his children to starve the year before. Truth, generosity, nobleness of will and mind, these things do not exist beyond the influence of the 'Times' newspaper and the 'Saturday Review.' (By the way, it would be extraordinary if it *were so*.)

Well, I have lived thirteen years on the Continent, and, far as England is from Italy, far as the heavens are from the earth, I dissent from you, dissent from you, dissent from you.

I say so, and there is an end. It is relief to me, and will

make no impression on you; but for my sake you permit me to say it, I feel sure.

Dear Mr. Chorley, Robert and I have had true pleasure (in spite of all this fault-finding) in feeling ourselves close to you in your book. Volume after volume we have exchanged, talking of you, praising you here, blaming you there, but always feeling pleasure in reading your words and speaking your name. Don't say it's the last novel. You, who can do so much. Write us another at once rather, doing justice to our sublime Azeglios and acute Cavours and energetic Farinis. If I could hear an English statesman (Conservative or Liberal) speak out of a large heart and generous comprehension as I did Azeglio this last spring, I should thank God for it. I fear I never shall. My boy may, perhaps. Red tape has garrotted this political generation. . . .

I persist in being in high hopes for my Italy.

Ever affectionately yours

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

Early in December the move to Rome took place, and they found rooms at 28 Via del Tritone. During the winter Mrs. Browning was preparing for the press her last volume, the 'Poems before Congress,' while her husband, in a fit of disinclination to write poetry, occupied himself by trying his hand at sculpture.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: December 1859.]

Dearest Sarianna, — Robert will have told you of the success of our journey, which the necessities of Mr. Landor very nearly pushed back into the cold too late. We had even resolved that if the wind changed before morning we would accept it 'as a sign' and altogether give up Rome. We were all but run to ground, you see. Happily it didn't

end so; and here we are in a very nice sunny apartment, which would have been far beyond our means last year or any year except just now when the Pope's obstinacy and the rumoured departure of the French have left Rome a solitude and called it peace — very problematical peace. (Peni, in despair at leaving Florence, urged on us that 'for mama to have cold air in her chest would be better than to have a cannon-ball in her stomach;' but she was unreasonably more afraid of one than of the other.) Apartments here for which friends of ours paid forty pounds English the month last winter are going for fifteen or under — or rather not going — for nobody scarcely comes to take them. The Pope's 'reforms' seem to be limited, in spite of his alarming position, which is breaking his heart, he told a friend of Mrs. Stowe's the other day, and out of which he looks to be relieved only by some special miracle (the American was quite affected to hear the old man bewail himself!), to an edict against crinolines, the same being forbidden to sweep the sacred pavement of St. Peter's. This is *true*, though it sounds like a joke.

Even Florence has very few English. A crisis is looked for everywhere. Prices there are rising fast; but one is prepared to pay more for liberty. Carriages are dearer than in Paris by our new tariff, which is an item important to me. We left Mr. Landor in great comfort. I went to see his apartment before it was furnished. Rooms small, but with a look out into a little garden; quiet and cheerful; and he doesn't mind a situation rather out of the way. He pays four pound ten (English) the month. Wilson has *thirty* pounds a year for taking care of him, which sounds a good deal; but it *is* a difficult position. He has excellent, generous, affectionate impulses, but the impulses of the tiger every now and then. Nothing coheres in him, either in his opinions, or I fear, affections. It isn't age; he is precisely the man of his youth, I must believe. Still, his genius gives him the right of gratitude on all artists at least, and I must

say that my Robert has generously paid the debt. Robert always said that he owed more as a writer to Landor than to any contemporary. At present Landor is very fond of him; but I am quite prepared for his turning against us as he has turned against Forster, who has been so devoted for years and years. Only one isn't kind for what one gets by it, or there wouldn't be much kindness in this world.

I keep well; and of course, at Rome there is more chance for me than there was in Florence; but I hated to inflict an unpopular journey, of which the advantage was solely mine. Poor Peni said that if he had to leave his Florence he would rather go to Paris than to Rome. I dare say he would. Then his Florentines frightened him with ideas of the awful massacre we were to be subjected to here. The pony travelled like a glorified Houynhmn and we have brought a second male servant to take care of him. It was an economy; for the wages of Rome are inordinate. Pen's tender love to his nonno and you with that of

Your ever affectionate sister,

Ba.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome:] 28 Via Tritone: Friday [winter 1859].

My dearest Fanny, — Set me down as a wretch, but hear me. I have been ill again, in the first place; then as weak as a rag in consequence, and then with business accumulated on impotent hands; proofs to see to, and the like. You may have heard in the buzz of newspapers of certain presentation *swords*, subscribed for by twenty thousand Romans, at a franc each, and presented in homage and gratitude to Napoleon III. and Victor Emmanuel. Castellani[1]

[1] 'Do you see this ring?
'Tis Rome-work, made to match
(By *Castellani's* imitative craft)
Etrurian circlets,' etc.
(*The Ring and the Book*, i. 1–4.)

of course was the artist, and the whole business had to be huddled up at the end, because of his Holiness denouncing all such givers of gifts as traitors to the See. So just as the swords had to be packed up and disappear, some one came with a shut carriage to take me for a sight of these most exquisite works of art. It was five o'clock in the evening and raining, but not cold, so that the whole world here agreed it couldn't hurt me. I went with Robert therefore; we were received at Castellani's most flatteringly as poets and lovers of Italy; were asked for autographs; and returned in a blaze of glory and satisfaction, to collapse (as far as I'm concerned) in a near approach to mortality. You see I can't catch a simple cold. All my bad symptoms came back. Suffocations, singular heart-action, cough tearing one to atoms. A gigantic blister, however, let me crawl out of bed at the end of a week, and the advantage of a Roman climate *told*, I dare say, for the attack was less violent and much less long than the one in the summer. Only I feel myself brittle, and become aware of increased susceptibility. Dr. Gresonowsky warns me against Florence in the winter. I must be warm, they say. Well, never mind! Now I am well again, and I don't know why I should have whined so to you. I am well, and living on asses' milk by way of sustaining the mental calibre; yes, and able to have *tête-à-têtes* with Theodore Parker, who believes nothing, you know, and has been writing a little Christmas book for the young just now, to prove how they should keep Christmas without a Christ, and a Mr. Hazard, a spiritualist, who believes everything, walks and talks with spirits, and impresses Robert with a sense of veracity, which is more remarkable. I like the man much. He holds the subject on high grounds, takes the idea and lives on it above the earth. For years he has given himself to investigation, and has seen the Impossible. Certainly enough Robert met him and conversed with him, and came back to tell me what an intelligent and agreeable new American

acquaintance he had made, without knowing that he was Hazard the spiritualist, rather famous in his department. . . . Don't fall out of heart with investigation. It takes patient investigation to establish the number of legs of a newly remarked fly. Nothing *riles* me so much as the dogmatism of the people who pronounce on there being nothing to see, because in half a dozen experiments, perhaps, they have seen nothing conclusive.

'Yet could not all creation pierce
Beyond the bottom of his eye.'

Mediums cheat certainly. So do people who are not mediums. I congratulate you on liking anybody better. That's pleasant for *you* at any rate. My changes are always the other way. I begin by seeing the beautiful in most people, and then comes the disillusion. It isn't caprice or unsteadiness; oh no! it's merely *fate*. *My* fate, I mean. Alas, my bubbles, my bubbles!

But I'm growing too original, and will break off. My Emperor at least, has not deceived me, and I'm going into the fire for him with a little 'brochure' of political poems, which you shall take at Chapman's with the last edition of 'Aurora' when you go to England. Thank you a hundred times from both Robert and me for the interesting relation of Cobden's sayings on him. If Cobden had not rushed beyond civilisation, I should like to offer him my little book. I should like it. Self-love is the great malady of England, and immortal would the statesman be who could and would tear a wider horizon for the popular mind. As to the rifle-cry, *I* never doubted (for one) that it had its beginning with 'interested persons.' Never was any cry more ignoble. A rescues B from being murdered by C, and E cries out, 'What if *A* should murder *me!*' That's the logic of the subject. And the sentiment is worthy of the logic.

I expect to be torn to pieces by English critics for what I have ventured to write. . . .

Write me one of your amusing letters, and take our love, especially

Your ever affectionate Ba's.

There is no Roman news, people are so scarce. The Storys have given a ball, Italians chiefly. We think of little but politics.

To Mrs. Martin

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: December 29 [1859].

It was pleasant to have news of you, dearest friends, and to know of your being comfortably established at Pau this cold winter, as it seems to be in the north. We came here, flying from the Florence tramontana, at the very close of November, on the Perugia road, after having been weather-bound at Casa Guidi till we almost gave up our Roman plan. Most happily the cold spared us during our six days' journey, which was very pleasant. I like travelling by vetturino. The fatigue is small, and if you take a supply of books with you the time does not hang fire. We had some old Balzacs, which came new (he is one of our gods — heathen, you will say) and we had, besides, Charles Reade's 'Love me Little, Love me Long,' which is full of ability. Then Peni had his pony as a source of interest. The pony was fastened to the vettura horses, and came into Rome, not merely fresh, but fat. And we have fallen into pleasant places by way of lodgings here, our friends having prepared a list to choose from, so that I had only to drop out of the hotel into bright sunny rooms, which do not cost too much on account of the comparative desertion of this holy city this year. We arrived on December 3, and here it is nearly January 1 — almost a month. The older one grows the faster time passes. Do you observe that?

You catch the wind of the wheels in your face, it seems, as you get nearer the end. I observe it strongly.

Let me say of myself first that I am particularly well, and feel much more sure and steady than since my illness. How are you both? I do hope and trust you can give me good news of yourselves. Do you read aloud to one another or each alone? Robert and I do the last always. May God bless you both in health of body and soul, and every source of happiness for the coming and other years. I wish and pray it out of my heart. . . .

And you are studying music? I honour you for it. Do tell me, dearest Mrs. Martin, did you know nothing of music before, and have you taken up the piano? I hold a peculiar heresy as to the use hereafter of what we learn here. When there is no longer any growth in me, I desire to die — for one. And at present I by no means desire to die.

So you and others upbraid me with having put myself out of my 'natural place.' What *is* one's natural place, I wonder? For the Chinese it is the inner side of the wall. For the red man it is the forest. The natural place of everybody, I believe, is within the crust of all manner of prejudices, social, religious, literary. That is as men conceive of 'natural places.' But, in the highest sense, I ask you, how *can* a man or a woman leave his or her natural place. Wherever God's universe is round, and God's law above, there is a natural place. Circumstances, the force of natural things, have brought me here and kept me; it is my natural place. And, intellectually speaking, having grown to a certain point by help of certain opportunities, my way of regarding the world is also natural to me, my opinions are the natural deductions of my mind. Isn't it so? Still I do beg to say both to you and to others accusing that Italy is not my 'adopted country.' I love Italy, but I love France, too, and certainly I love England. Because I have broken through what seems to me the English 'Little Pedlingtonism,' am I to be supposed to take up an Italian

'Little Pedlingtonism?' No, indeed. I love truth and justice, or I try to love truth and justice, more than any Plato's or Shakespeare's country.[1] I certainly do not love the egotism of England, nor wish to love it. I class England among the most immoral nations in respect to her foreign politics. And her 'National Defence' cry fills me with disgust. But this by no means proves that I have adopted another country — no, indeed! In fact, patriotism in the narrow sense is a virtue which will wear out, sooner or later, everywhere. Jew and Greek must drop their antagonisms; and if Christianity is ever to develop it will not respect frontiers.

As to Italy, though I nearly broke my heart over her last summer, and love the Italians deeply, I should feel passionately any similar crisis anywhere. You cannot judge the people or the question out of the 'Times' newspaper, whose sole policy is, it seems to me, to get up a war between France and England, though the world should perish in the struggle. The amount of fierce untruth uttered in that paper, and sworn to by the 'Saturday Review,' makes the moral sense curdle within one. You do not *know* this as we do, and you therefore set it down as matter of Continental prejudice on my part. Well, time will prove. As to Italy, I have to put on the rein to prevent myself from hoping into the Ideal again. I am on my guard against another fall from that chariot of the sun. But things look magnificently, and if I could tell you certain facts (which I can't) you would admit it. Odo Russell, the English Minister here (in an occult sense) who, with a very acute mind, is strongly Russell and English, and was full of the English distrust of L.N. when with us at Siena last September, came to me two days ago and said, 'It is plain now. The Emperor is rather Italian than French. He has worked, and is working, only for Italy; and whatever has seemed

[1] Mrs. Browning is here quoting from her own preface to *Poems before Congress.*

otherwise has been forced from him in order to keep on terms with his colleagues, the kings and queens of Europe. Everything that comes out proves it more and more.' In fact, he has risked everything for the Italians except *their cause*. I am delighted, among other things, at Cavour's representation of Italy at the Congress. Antonelli and his party are in desperation, gnashing their teeth at the Tuileries. The position of the Emperor is most difficult, but his great brain will master it. We are rather uneasy about the English Ministry — its work in Congress; it might go out for me (falling to pieces on the pitiful Suez question or otherwise), but we do want it at Congress.

To Mrs. Jameson

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: February 22 [1860].

Dearest, naughtiest Mona Nina, — Where is the place of your soul, your body abiding at Brighton, that never, no, never, do I hear from you? It seems hard. Last summer I was near to slipping out of the world, and then, except for a rap, you might have called on me in vain (and said rap you wouldn't have believed in). Also, even this winter, even in this Rome, the city of refuge, I have had an attack, less long and sharp, indeed, but weakening, and, though I am well now, and have corrected the proofs of a very thin and wicked 'brochure' on Italian affairs (in verse, of course), yet still I am not too strong for cod-liver oil and the affectionateness of such friends as you (I speak as if I had a shoal of such friends — povera me!). Write to me, therefore. Especially as the English critics will worry me alive for my book and you will have to say, 'Well done, critics!' so write before you read it, to say, 'Ba, I love you.' That makes up for everything. Oh, I know you did write to me in the summer. And then I wrote to you; and then there came a *pause*, which is hard on me, I repeat.

Geddie has come here, lamenting also. Besides, we

have been somewhat disappointed by your not coming to Italy. Never will you come to Rome as Geddie expects, late in the spring, to take an apartment close to her, looking charmingly on the river. I told her quite frankly that you would not be so unwise. Rome is empty of foreigners this year, a few Americans standing for all. Then, in the midst of the quiet, deeply does the passion work: on one side, with the people, on the other in the despair and rage of the Papal Government. The Pope can't go out to breakfast, to drink chocolate and talk about 'Divine things' to the 'Christian youth,' but he stumbles upon the term 'new ideas,' and, falling precipitately into a fury, neither evangelical nor angelical, calls Napoleon a *sicario* (cut-throat), and Vittorio Emanuele an *assassino*. The French head of police, who was present, whispered to acquaintances of ours, 'Comme il enrage le saint père.' In fact, all dignity has been repeatedly forgotten in simple *rage*. Affairs of Italy generally are going on to the goal, and we look for the best and glorious results, perhaps *not without more fighting*. Certainly we can't leave Venetia in the mouth of Austria by a second Villafranca. We cannot and will not. And, sooner or later, the Emperor is prepared, I think, to carry us through. Odo Russell told me (without my putting any question to him) that everything, as it came out, proved how true he had been to Italy—that, in fact, he had 'rather acted as an Italian than as a Frenchman.' And Mr. Russell, while liberal, is himself very English, and free from Buonaparte tendencies from hair to heel.

We often have letters from dear Isa Blagden, who sends me the Florence news, more shining from day to day. Central Italy seems safe.

But let me tell you of my thin slice of a wicked book. Yes, I shall expect you to read it, and I send you an order for it to Chapman, therefore. Everybody will hate me for it, and so *you must* try hard to love me the more to make up for that. Say it's mad, and bad, and sad; but *add* that

somebody did it who meant it, thought it, felt it, throbbed it out with heart and brain, and that she holds it for truth in conscience and not in partisanship. I want to tell you (oh, I can't help telling you) that when the ode was read before Peni, at the part relating to Italy his eyes overflowed, and down he threw himself on the sofa, hiding his face. The child has been very earnest about Italian politics. The heroine of that poem called 'The Dance'[1] was Madame di Laiatico. The 'Court Lady' is an individualisation of a general fashion, the ladies at Milan having gone to the hospitals in full dress and in open carriages. Macmahon taking up the child[2] is also historical. I believe the facts to be in the book: 'He has done it all,'[3] were Cavour's words. When you see an advertisement and have an opportunity to apply at Chapman's, do so 'by this sign' enclosed. I read of you in the papers, stirring up the women.

Write and say how you are, and where you are.

[*Part of this letter is missing.*]

Your ever very affectionate

BA.

I hope you liked the article on the immorality of luncheon-rooms in your high-minded 'Saturday Review.'

[1] *Poetical Works*, iv. 190.

[2] See 'Napoleon III. in Italy,' stanza 11, *ibid.* p. 181. The incident occurred at Macmahon's entry into Milan, three days after Magenta.

[3] *Ibid.* stanza 12.

CHAPTER XI

1860–1861

EARLY in 1860 the promised booklet, 'Poems before Congress,' was published in England, and met with very much the reception the authoress had anticipated. It contained only eight poems, all but one relating to the Italian question. Published at a time when the events to which they alluded were still matters of current controversy, they could not but be regarded rather as pamphleteering than as poetry; and it could hardly be expected that the ordinary Englishman, whose sympathy with Italy did not abolish his mistrust (eminently justifiable, as later revelations have shown it to be) of Louis Napoleon, should read with equanimity the continual scorn of English policy and motives, or the continual exaltation of the Emperor. Looking back now over a distance of nearly forty years, and when the Second Empire, with all its merits and its sins, has long gone to its account, we can, at least in part, put aside the politics and enjoy the poetry. Though pieces like 'The Dance' and 'A Court Lady' are not of much permanent value, there are many fine passages, notably in 'Napoleon III. in Italy,' and 'Italy and the World,' in which a true and noble enthusiasm is expressed in living and burning words, worthy of a poet.

For attacks on her Italian politics Mrs. Browning was prepared, as the foregoing letters show; but one incident caused her real and quite unexpected annoyance. The

reviewer in the 'Athenæum' (apparently Mr. Chorley) by some unaccountable oversight took the 'Curse for a Nation' to apply to England, instead of being (as it obviously is) a denunciation of American slavery. Consequently he referred to this poem in terms of strong censure, as improper and unpatriotic on the part of an English writer; and a protest from Mrs. Browning only elicited a somewhat grudging editorial note, in a tone which implied that the interpretation which the reviewer had put upon the poem was one which it would naturally bear. One can hardly be surprised at the annoyance which this treatment caused to Mrs. Browning, though some of the phrases in which she speaks of it bear signs of the excitement which characterised so much of her thought in these years of mental strain and stress, and bodily weakness and decay.

To Mrs. Jameson

(Fragment) [Early in 1860.]

I remember well your kindness to it. Nothing was said then about the 'fit arguments for poetry,' and I recovered from it to write 'Aurora Leigh,' of which, however, many people did say that it was built on an unfit argument, and besides was a very indecent, corrupting book (have I not heard of ladies of sixty, who had 'never felt themselves pure since reading it'?) But now, consider. Since you did not lose hope for me in 'Casa Guidi Windows,' because the line of politics was your own, why need you despair of me in the 'Poems before Congress,' although I do praise the Devil in them? A mistake is not fatal to a critic? need it be to a poet? Does Napoleon's being wicked (if he is so) make Italy less interesting? or unfit for poetry, historical subjects like 'The Dance' or the 'Court Lady?'

Meanwhile that thin-skinned people the Americans exceed some of you in generosity, rendering thanks to reprovers of their ill-deeds, and understanding the pure love

of the motive.[1] Let me tell you rather for their sake than mine. I have extravagant praises and *prices* offered to me from 'over the western sun,' in consequence of these very 'Poems before Congress.' The nation is generous in these things and not 'thin-skinned.'

As to England, I shall be forgiven in time. The first part of a campaign and the first part of a discussion are the least favourable to English successes. After a while (by the time you have learnt to shoot cats with the new rifles), you will put them away, and arrive at the happy second thought which corrects the first thought. That second thought will not be of *invasion*, prophesies a headless prophet. 'Time was when heads were off a man would die.' A man — yes. But a woman! *We* die hard, you know.

Here, an end. I hope you will write to me some day, and ease me by proving to me that I have ceased to be bitter to the palate of your soul. Believe this — that, rather than be a serious sadness to you, I would gladly sit on in the pillory under the aggressive mud of that mob of 'Saturday Reviewers,' who take their mud and their morals from the same place, and use voices hoarse with hooting down un-English poetesses, to cheer on the English champion, Tom Sayers. For me, I neither wish for the 'belt'[2] nor martyrdom; but if I were ambitious of anything, it might be to be wronged where, for instance, Cavour is wronged.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome,] Friday [end of March 1860].

My ever dearest Isa, — I am scarcely in heart yet for writing letters, and did not mean to write to-day. You heard of the unexpected event which brought me the loss of a very dear friend, dear, dear Mrs. Jameson.[3] It was,

[1] This refers to the 'Curse for a Nation.'

[2] See note on p. 387.

[3] Mrs. Jameson died on March 17, 1860.

of course, a shock to me, as such things are meant to be. . . .

And now I come to what makes me tax you with a dull letter, I feeling so dully; and, dear, it is with dismay I have to tell you that the letter you addressed under cover to Mr. Russell has *never reached us*. Till your last communication (this moment received), I had hoped that the contents of it might have been less important than O.-papers must be. What is to be done, or thought? I beseech you to write and tell me if *harm* is likely to follow from this seizure. The other inclosure came to me quite safely, because it came by the Government messenger. I think you sent it through Corbet. But Mr. Russell's *post* letters are as liable to opening as mine are; his name is no security. Whenever you send a 'Nazione' newspaper through him, it never reaches us, though we receive our 'Monitore' through him regularly. Why? Because in his position he is allowed to have newspapers for his own use. He takes in for himself no 'Monitore,' so ours goes to his account, but he does take in a 'Nazione,' therefore ours is seized, as being plainly for other hands than his own licensed ones.

I am very much grieved about this loss of your letter and its contents. First, there's my fear lest harm should come of this, and then there's my own personal *mulcting* of what would have been of such deep interest to me. I am 'revelling'? See how little.

Robert wrote in a playful vein to Kate, and you must not and will not care for that. He had understood from your letter that you and the majority had all, like the 'Athenæum,' understood the 'Curse for a Nation' to be directed against England. Robert was *furious* about the 'Athenæum;' no other word describes him, and I thought that both I and Mr. Chorley would perish together, seeing that even the accusation (such a one!) made me infamous, it seemed.

The curious thing is, that it was at Robert's suggestion

that that particular poem was reprinted there (it never had appeared in England), though 'Barkis was willing;' I had no manner of objection. I never have to justice.

Mr. Chorley's review is objectionable to me because unjust. A reviewer should read the book he gives judgment on, and he could not have read from beginning to end the particular poem in question, and have expounded its significance so. I wrote a letter on the subject to the 'Athenæum' to correct this mis-statement, which I cared for chiefly on Robert's account.

In fact, *I* cursed neither England nor America. I leave such things to our Holy Father here; the poem only pointed out how the curse was involved in the action of slave-holding.

I never saw Robert so enraged about a criticism. He is better now, let me add.

In the matter of Savoy,[1] it has vexed and vexes me, I do confess to you. It's a handle given to various kinds of dirty hands, it spoils the beauty and glory of much, the uncontested admiration of which would have done good to the world. At the same time, as long as Piedmont and Savoy agree in the annexation to France, there is nothing to object to — not to object to with a reasonable mind. And it seems to be understood (it is stated in fact), that the cession is under condition of the assent of the populations. The Vote is necessary to the honour of France. I do not doubt that it will be consulted. Meantime there is too much haste, I think. There is a haste somewhat indelicate in the introduction of French garrisons into Savoy, previous to the popular conclusion being known. There should have been mixed garrisons, French and Piedmontese, till the vote was taken. Napoleon should have been more particular in Savoy than he was even in Central Italy, as to

[1] The surrender to France of Savoy and Nice, which, though propounded by Napoleon to Cavour before the war, was only definitely demanded at the end of February 1860.

the advance of any occasion of the current charge of 'pressure.'

Altogether the subject is an anxious one — would be, even if less rancorous violence on the part of his enemies were wreaked upon it. The English Tories are using it with the frenzy of despair, and no wonder!

Lamoricière's arrival is another proof of the internal coalition against the Empire.

Now I must end, Robert says, or I shall lose the post. My true best love, and Robert's — and Peni's.

Write to me, do, dearest Isa, and tell me if the MSS. sent were *nuisibles*. The Excommunication just out is said to include the Emperor.

Your ever loving

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: about March 1860.]

Dearest Sarianna, — It is impossible to have a regret for dear Lady Elgin. She has been imprisoned here under double chains too long. To be out of the dark and the restraint is a blessing to that spirit, and must be felt so by all who love her. Of course I shall write to Lady Augusta Bruce. . . .

No, I don't think there is much to be forgiven by my countrymen in my book. What I reproach them for, none of them deny. They certainly took no part in the war, nor will they if there is more war, and certainly the existence of the rifle clubs is a fact.

Robert and I began to write on the Italian question together, and our plan was (Robert's own suggestion!) to publish jointly. When I showed him my ode on Napoleon he observed that I was gentle to England in comparison to what he had been, but after Villafranca (the Palmerston Ministry having come in) he destroyed his poem and left me alone, and I determined to stand alone. What Robert

had written no longer suited the moment; but the poetical devil in me burnt on for an utterance. I have spoken nothing but historical truths, as far as the outline is concerned. But the spirit of the whole, is, of course, opposed to the national feeling, or I should not in my preface suppose it to be offended.

With every deference to you, dearest Sarianna, I cannot think that you who live, as the English usually do, quite aside and apart from French society, can judge of the interest in France for Italy. I see French letters — letters of French men and women — giving a very contrary impression. The French newspapers give a very contrary impression. And the statistics of books and pamphlets published and circulated in France on the Italian question this year are in most prodigious disaccord with such a conclusion. Compare them with the same statistics in England, and then judge.

Besides the English, to do them justice, can be active and generous in any cause in which they are really interested, and it is a fact that we could not get up a subscription in England even for Garibaldi's muskets lately, while France is always giving.

Not that there are not, and have not been, many English of generous sympathies towards Italy. That I well know. But it is a small, protesting minority. Lord John has done very well, as far as words can go, but it has been simply in giving effect to the intentions of France, who wanted much a respectable conservative Power like England to endorse her bill of revolution with the retrograde European Governments.

I will spare what I think of the treatment in England of the Savoy question. We are losing all moral prestige in the eyes of the world, with our small jealousies and factional struggles for power.

Ah! dear Sarianna, I don't complain for myself of an unappreciating public — *I have no reason*. But, just for *that*

reason, I complain more about Robert, only he does not hear me complain. To *you* I may say, that the blindness, deafness, and stupidity of the English public to Robert are amazing. Of course Milsand had 'heard his name'! Well, the contrary would have been strange. Robert *is*. All England can't prevent his existence, I suppose. But nobody there, except a small knot of pre-Raffaelite men, pretends to do him justice. Mr. Forster has done the best in the press. As a sort of lion, Robert has his range in society, and, for the rest, you should see Chapman's returns; while in America he's a power, a writer, a poet. He is read — he lives in the hearts of the people. 'Browning readings' here in Boston; 'Browning evenings' there. For the rest, the English hunt lions too, Sarianna, but their favourite lions are chosen among 'lords' chiefly, or 'railroad kings.' 'It's worth *eating much dirt*,' said an Englishman of high family and character here, 'to get to Lady ——'s soirée.' Americans will eat dirt to get to *us*. There's the difference. English people will come and stare at *me* sometimes, but physicians, dentists, who serve me and refuse their fees, artists who give me pictures, friends who give up their carriages and make other practical sacrifices, are *not English* — no — though English Woolner was generous about a bust. Let *me* be just at least.

There is a beautiful photograph of Wilde's picture of Pen on horseback, which shall go to you, the likeness better than in the picture.

I can scarcely allude to the loss of my loved friend Mrs. Jameson. It's a blot more on the world to me. Best love to you and the dear Nonno from Pen and myself. The editor of the 'Atlas' writes to thank me for the justice and courage of my international politics. English clergyman stops at the door to say to the servant, 'He does not know me, but applauds my sentiments.' So there may be ten just persons who spare

Your affectionate sister.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome]: Saturday [April 1860].

My dearest dear Isa, not well! That must be the first word 'by return of post.' Dear, let me have a better letter, to say that you are well and bright again, and brilliant Isa as customary.

And now, join me in admiration of the 'husband Browning!' Isn't he a miracle, whoever else may be? The wife Browning, not to name most other human beings, would have certainly put the 'Monitore' receipt into the fire, or, at best, lost it. In fact, whisper it not in the streets of Askelon, but *she* had forgotten even the fact of its having been sent, and was quietly concluding that Wilson had lost it in a fog and that we should have patiently to pay twice. Not at all. Up rises the husband Browning, superior to his mate, and with eyes all fire, holds up the receipt like an heroic rifleman looking to a French invasion at the end of a hundred years. Blessed be they who keep receipts. It is a beatitude beyond my reach.

Only I do hope my Tuscan friends of the 'Monitore' are only careless and forgetful in their business habits, and that they didn't think of 'annexing'—eh, Isa! No, I don't believe it was dishonesty, it might have so very well been oblivion.

May the paper come to-day, that's all. We get the 'Galignani,' but can't afford to miss our Italian news. Then, not only we ourselves, but half a dozen Tuscan exiles here in Rome who are not allowed to read a freely breathed word, come to us for that paper, friends of Ferdinando's living in Rome. First he lent them the paper, then they got frightened for fear of being convicted through some spy of reading such a thing,[1] and prayed to come to this house to read it. There have been six of them sometimes in the

[1] Rome, it will be remembered, was still under Papal government.

evening. We keep a sort of café in Rome, observe, and your 'Monitore' is necessary to us.

You have seen by this time Lamoricière's[1] address to the Papal army. It's extraordinary, while the French are still here, that such a publication should be permitted, obvious as the position taken must be to all, and personally displeasing to the Emperor as the man is known to be. Magnanimity is certainly a great feature of Napoleon's mind. And now what next? The French are going, of course. You would suppose an attack on Romagna imminent. And better so. Let us have it out at once.

I have the papers. I am much the better for some things in them. There's to be the universal suffrage, the withdrawal of troops, whatever I wanted. Cavour's dispatch to the Swiss is also excellent. Those injured martyrs wanted the bone in their teeth, that's all.

The wailing in England for Swiss and Savoyards, while other nationalities are to be trodden under foot without intervention, except what's called *aggression*, is highly irritating to me.

Dearest Isa, Robert tore me from my last sentence to you. I was going to say that I cared less for the attacks of the press on my book than I care for your sympathy. Thank you for feeling 'mad' for me. But be sane again. Dear, it's not worth being mad for.

In the advertised 'Blackwood,' do you see an article called 'Poetic Aberration?' It came into my head that it might be a stone thrown at me, and Robert went to Monaldini's to glance at it. Sure enough it is a stone. He says a violent attack. And let me do him justice. It was only the misstatement in the 'Athenæum' which overset him, only the first fire which made him wink. Now he turns a hero's face to all this cannonading. He doesn't care a straw, he says, and what's more, he doesn't, really. So I, who was

[1] The French general appointed by the Pope in April, 1860, to command the Papal army.

only sorry for him, can't care. Observe, Isa, if there had been less violence and more generosity, the poems would obviously have been less deserved.

The English were not always so thin-skinned. Lord Byron and Moore have. . . .

[*The rest of the letter is lost.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Rome: April 2, [1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — Here are the letters! I am sorry I wrote rashly yesterday; but from an expression of yours I took for granted that the packet went by the post; and I have been really very anxious about it.

No, Isa; I don't like the tone of these letters so well. I can understand that what is said of Belgium and the Rhine provinces is in the event of a certain coalition and eventual complication, but it doesn't do, even in a thought and theory, to sacrifice a country like Belgium. I respect France, and 'l'idée Napoléonne;' yes, but conscience and the populations more.

As to Napoleon's waiting for the bribe of Savoy before he would pass beyond Villafranca, this is making him ignoble; and I do not believe it in the least. Also it contradicts the letter-writer's previous letter, in which he said that Savoy had been from the beginning the *sous entendre* of Venetia. No, I can see that an Italy in unity, a great newly constituted nation, might be reasonably asked by her liberator to shift her frontier from beyond the Alps, but for Victor Emmanuel to be expected at Milan to put his hand into his pocket and pay, without completion of facts, or consultation of peoples, this would be to 'faire le marchand' indeed, and I could write no odes to a man who could act so. I don't sell my soul to Napoleon, and

applaud him *quand même*. But absolutely I disbelieve in this version, Isa. If the war had not stopped at Villafranca, it would have been European; *that*, if not clear at the time, is clear now — clear from the official statement of Prussia. By putting diplomacy in the place of the war, a great deal was absolutely attained, besides a better standpoint for a renewal of the war, should that be necessary. 'Hence those tears' — of Villafranca!

The letter-writer is very keen, and evidently hears a good deal, while he selects after his own judgment. *I* am glad to hear that 'L'Opinion Nationale' represents the efficient power. That's comfortable. What's to be done next in the south here rests with *us*, it seems. But what of the occupation of Rome? And what is the meaning of Lamoricière being here 'with the consent of the Emperor'? Lamoricière can mean no good either to the French Government or to Italy; and the Emperor knows it well.

My dearest Isa, let us make haste to say that of course I shall be glad to let my book be used as is proposed. How will we get a copy to M. Fauvety? I enclose an order to Chapman and Hall which M. Dall' Ongaro[1] may enclose to his friend, who must enclose it on to England, with a letter conveying his address in Paris. Then the book may be sent by the *book post*. Wouldn't that do?

I shall give a copy to Dall' Ongaro (when I can get a supply), and one for the Trollopes also, never forgetting dear Kate! (and I do expect copies through the embassy) but I have not seen a word of the book yet. I only know that, being Cæsar's wife, I am not merely 'suspected' (poor wife!), but dishonored before the 'Athenæum' world as an unnatural vixen, who, instead of staying at home and spinning wool, stays at home and curses her own land. 'It is my own, my native land!' If, indeed, I had gone abroad and cursed other people's lands, there would have been no

[1] The Italian poet.

objection. That poem, as addressed to America, has always been considered rather an amiable and domestic trait on my part. But England! Heavens and earth! What a crime! The very suspicion of it is guilt.

The fact is, between you and me, Isa, certain of those quoted stanzas do 'fit' England 'as if they were made for her,' which they were *not* though. . . .

According to your letters, Venetia seems pushed off into the future a little, don't you think?

Still, they are interesting, very. Get Dall' Ongaro to remember me in future. The details about Antonelli shall go to him. I am delighted at the idea of being translated by him. . . .

Write to me, my dearly loved Isa. You who are true! let me touch you!

Yours ever from the heart.

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

28 Via del Tritone:
Monday and Tuesday [April 1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — I send you under this enclosure an abstract of some papers given to me by somebody who can't be named, with a sketch of Antonelli. I wasn't allowed to copy; I was only to abstract. But everything is in. The whole has been verified and may be absolutely relied on, I hear. So long I have waited for them. Should I have translated them into Italian, I wonder? Or can Dall' Ongaro get to the bottom of them so? Dates of birth are not mentioned, I observe. From another quarter I may get those. About has the character of romancing a little.

Not a word do you say of your health. Do another time. Remember that your previous letter left you in bed.

Dearest Isa, how it touched me, your putting away the 'Saturday Review'! But dear, don't care more for me than

I do for myself. That very Review, lent to us, *we* lent to the Storys. Dear, the abuse of the press is the justification of the poems; so don't be reserved about these attacks. I was a little, little vexed by a letter this morning from my brother George; but *pazienza*, we must bear these things. Robert called yesterday on Odo Russell, who observed to him that the article in the 'Saturday Review' was infamous, and that the general tone of the newspaper had grown to be so offensive, he should cease to take it in. (Not on my account, observe.) 'But,' said Mr. Russell, 'it's extraordinary, the sensation your wife's book has made. Every paper I see has something to say about it,' added he; 'it is curious. The offence has been less in the objections to England than in the praise of Napoleon. Certainly Monckton Milnes said a good thing when he was asked lately in Paris what, after all, you English wanted. "*We want*," he answered, "*first, that the Austrians should beat you French thoroughly; next, we want that the Italians should be free, and then we want them to be very grateful to us for doing nothing towards it.*" This,' concluded Russell, 'sums up the whole question.' Mark, he is very English, but he can't help seeing what lies before him, having quick perceptions, moreover. Then men have no courage. Milnes, for instance, keeps his sarcasm for Paris, and in England supports his rifle club and all Parliamentary decencies.

Mind you read 'Blackwood.' Though I was rather vexed by George's letter (he is awfully vexed) I couldn't help laughing at my sister Henrietta, who accepts the interpretation of the 'Athenæum' (having read the poems) and exclaims, 'But, oh, Ba, such dreadful curses!' . . .

Mrs. Apthorp has arrived, but I have not seen her nor received the paper. Pins were right, though I should have liked some smaller. 'Monitores' arrived up at the 12. Beyond, nothing. I hear that Mr. Apthorp was struck

with the 'brilliant conversation between you and Miss Cobbe.' You made an impression too, on Mrs. Apthorp.

Oh, Isa, how I should like to be with you in our Florence to-day. Yes, yes, I think of you. Here the day is gloomy, and with a sprinkling now and then of rain. I trust you may have more sun. God bless the city and the hills, and the people who dwell therein.

I have just sent a lyric to Thackeray for his magazine.[1] He begged me for something long ago. Robert suggested that *now* he probably wanted nothing from such profane hands. So I told him that in that case he might send me back my manuscripts. In the more favorable case it may be still too late for this month. The poem is 'meek as maid,' though the last thing I wrote — no touch of 'Deborah' — '*A Musical Instrument.*' How good this 'Cornhill Magazine' is! Anthony Trollope is really superb.[2] I only just got leave from Robert to send something: he is so averse to the periodicals as mediums. . . .

Lamoricière's arrival produces a painful sensation among the people here; and the withdrawal of the French troops has become most unpopular. I am anxious. If the Emperor has consented to his coming, it was pure magnanimity, and very characteristic; but the *cost of this* should be paid by France and not Italy, we must feel besides. I am content about Savoy.

Dearest Isa, you and your 'Saturday Reviewer' shall have Robert's portrait. Are you sure he didn't ask for *mine?* How good you are to us and Landor! God bless you, says

Your tenderly loving

BA.

[1] The *Cornhill Magazine*, the first number of which was published, under Thackeray's editorship, in December 1859. Mrs. Browning's poem, 'A Musical Instrument' (*Poetical Works*, v. 10), was published in the number for July 1860.

[2] His 'Framley Parsonage' was then appearing in the *Cornhill*.

To Mr. Chorley

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: April 13, [1860].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — It is always better to be frank than otherwise; sometimes it is necessary to be frank — that is when one would fain keep a friend, yet has a thing against him which burns in one. I shall put my foot on this spark in a moment; but first I must throw it out of my heart you see, and here it is.

Dearest Mr. Chorley, you have not been just to me in the matter of my 'Poems before Congress.' Why have you not been just to me? You are an honest man and my friend. Those two things might go together. Your opinions, critical or political, are free from stress of friendship. I never expected from you favor or mercy *because* you were my friend (it would have been unworthy of us both) but I did expect justice from you, *although* you were my friend. That is reasonable.

And I consider that as a conscientious critic you were bound to read through the whole of the 'rhyme' called 'A Curse for a Nation' before ticketing it for the public; and I complain that after neglecting to do so and making a mistake in consequence, you refused the poor amends of printing my letter in full. A loose paragraph like this found to-day in your 'Athenæum' about Mrs. Browning 'wishing to state' that the 'Curse' was levelled at America *quoad* negro-slavery, and the satisfaction of her English readers in this correction of what was 'generally thought;' as if Mrs. Browning 'stated' it arbitrarily (perhaps from fright) and as if the poem stated nothing distinctly, and as if the intention of it *could* be 'generally thought' what the 'Athenæum' critic took it to be, except by following his lead or adopting his process of a general skipping of half the said poem — this loose paragraph does not cover a great fault, it seems to me. Well, I have spoken.

As to the extent of the 'general thought,' we cannot, of

course, judge here, where it is so difficult to get access to periodicals. We have seen, however, two virulent articles from enemies in 'Blackwood' and the 'Saturday Review,' the latter sparing none of its native mud through three columns; *not* to speak of a renewal of the charge in several political articles with a most flattering persistency. Both these writers (being enemies) keep clear of the 'general thought' suggested by a friend, and accepted indeed by friendly and generous reviewers in the 'Atlas' and 'Daily News.' Therefore I feel perfectly unaggrieved by all the enemies' hard words. They speak from their own point of view, and have a right to speak.

In fact, in printing the poems, I did not expect to help my reputation in England, but simply to deliver my soul, to get the relief to my conscience and heart, which comes from a pent-up word spoken or a tear shed. Whatever I may have ever written of the least worth, has represented a conviction in me, something in me felt as a truth. I never wrote to please any of you, not even to please my own husband. Every genuine artist in the world (whatever his degree) goes to heaven for speaking the truth. It is one of the beatitudes of art, and attainable without putting off the flesh.

To be plain, and not mystical, it is obvious that if I had expected compliments and caresses from the English press to my 'Poems before Congress,' the said poems would have been little deserved in England, and a greater mistake on my part than any committed by the 'Athenæum,' which is saying much.

There! I have done. The spark is under my shoe. If in 'losing my temper' I have 'lost my music,' don't let it be said that I have lost my friend by my own fault and choice also.

For I would not willingly lose him, though he should be unjust to me thrice, instead of this once throughout our intercourse. Affectionately yours, dear Mr. Chorley,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

To Mr. Chorley

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: May 2, [1860].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — I make haste to answer your letter, and beg you to do the like in putting out of your life the least touch of pain or bitterness connected with me. It is true, true, true, that some of my earliest gladness in literary sympathy and recognition came from you. I was grateful to you then as a stranger, and I am not likely ever to forget it as a friend. Believe this of me, as I feel it of *you*.

In the matter of reviews and of my last book, and before leaving the subject for ever, I want you distinctly to understand that my complaint related simply to the mistake in facts, and not to any mistake in opinion. The quality of neither mercy nor justice should be strained in the honest reviewer by the personal motive; and, because you felt a regard for me, *that* was no kind of reason why you should like my book.

In printing the poems, I well knew the storm of execration which would follow. Your zephyr from the 'Athenæum' was the first of it, gentle indeed in comparison with various gusts from other quarters. All fair it was from your standpoint, to see me as a prophet without a head, or even as a woman in a shrewish temper, and if my husband had not been especially pained by my being held up at the end of a fork as the unnatural she-monster who had 'cursed' her own country (following the Holy Father), I should have left the '*mistake*' to right itself, without troubling the 'Athenæum' office with the letter they would not insert. In fact, Robert was a little vexed with me for not being vexed enough. I was only vexed enough when the 'Athenæum' corrected its misstatement in its own way. *That did* extremely vex me, for it made me look ungenerous, cowardly, mean — as if, in haste to escape from the dogs in England, I threw them the good name of America. 'Mrs. Browning *now states*.'

Well, dear Mr. Chorley, it was not your doing. So the thing that 'vexed me enough' in you was a mistake of mine. Let us forgive one another our mistakes; and there, an end. *I* was wrong in taking for granted that the letter which referred to your review was entrusted to you to dispose of; and you were not right in being in too much haste to condemn a book you disliked to give the due measure of attention to every page of it. The insurgents being plainly insurgents, you shot one at least of them without trial, as was done in Spain the other day. True, that even favorable critics have fallen here and there into your very mistake; but is not that mainly attributable to the suggestive power of the 'Athenæum,' do you not believe so yourself? 'Thais led the way!'

And now that we clasp hands again, my dear friend, let me say one word as to the 'argument' of my last poems. Once, in a kind and generous review of 'Aurora Leigh,' you complained a little of 'new lights.' Now I appeal to you. Is it not rather *you* than I, who deal in 'new lights,' if the liberation of a people and the struggle of a nation for existence have ceased in your mind to be the right arguments for poetry? Observe, I may be wrong or right about Napoleon. He may be snake, scoundrel, devil, in his motives. But the thing he did was done before the eyes of all. His coming here was real, the stroke of his sword was indubitable, the rising and struggle of the people was beyond controversy, and the state of things at present is a fact. What if the father of poetry Homer (to go back to the oldest lights) made a mistake about the cause of Achilles' wrath. What if Achilles really wanted to get rid of Briseis and the war together, and sulked in his tent in a great sham? Should we conclude against the artistic propriety of the poet's argument therefore?

You greatly surprise me by such objections. It is objected to 'new lights,' as far as I know, that we are apt to be too metaphysical, self-conscious, subjective — everything

for which there are hard German words. The reproaches made against myself have been often of this nature, as you must be well aware. 'Beyond human sympathies' is a phrase in use among critics of a certain school. But that, in any school, any critic should consider the occasions of great tragic movements (such as a war for the life of a nation) unfit occasions for poetry, improper arguments, fills me with an astonishment which I can scarcely express adequately, and, pardon me, I can only understand your objection by a sad return on the English persistency in its mode of looking at the Italian war. You have looked at it always too much as a mere table for throwing dice — so much for France's ambition, so much for Piedmont's, so much stuff for intrigue in an English Parliament for ousting Whigs, or inning Conservatives. You have not realised to yourselves the dreadful struggle for national life, you who, thank God, have your life as a nation safe. A calm scholastic Italian friend of ours said to my husband at the peace, '*It's sad to think how the madhouses will fill after this.*' You do not conceive clearly the agony of a whole people with their house on fire, though Lord Brougham used that very figure to recommend your international neutrality. No, if you conceived of it, if you did not dispose of it lightly in your thoughts as of a Roccabella conspiracy, full half vanity, and only half serious — a Mazzini explosion, not a quarter justified, and taking place often on an affair of *métier* — you, a thoughtful and feeling man, would cry aloud that if poets represent the deepest things, the most tragic things in human life, they need not go further for an argument. And *I* say, my dear Mr. Chorley, that if, while such things are done and suffered, the poet's business is to rhyme the stars and walk apart, *I* say that Mr. Carlyle is right, and that the world requires more earnest workers than such dreamers can be.

For my part, I have always conceived otherwise of poetry. I believe that if anything written by me has been recognised

even by *you*, the cause is that I have written not to please you or any critic, but the deepest truth out of my own heart and head. I don't dream and make a poem of it. Art is not either all beauty or all use, it is essential truth which makes its way through beauty into use. Not that I say this for myself. Artistically, I may have failed in these poems — that is for the critic to consider; but in the choice of their argument I have not failed artistically, *I think*, or my whole artistic life and understanding of life have failed.

There, I cannot persuade you of this, but I believe it. I have tried to stand on the facts of things before I began to feel 'dithyrambically.' Thought out coldly, then felt upon warmly. I will not admit of 'being heated out of fairness!' I deny it, and stand upon my innocency.

And after all, 'Casa Guidi Windows' was a book that commended itself to you, Mr. Chorley.

[*The rest of this letter is missing.*]

To John Forster

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: Monday [May 1860].

I have tried and taken pains to see the truth, and have spoken it as I have seemed to see it. If the issue of events shall prove me wrong about the E. Napoleon, the worse for *him*, I am bold to say, rather than for me, who have honored him only because I believed his intentions worthy of the honor of honest souls.

If he lives long enough, he will explain himself to all. So far, I cannot help persisting in certain of my views, because they have been held long enough to be justified by the past on many points. The intervention in Italy, while it overwhelmed with joy, did not dazzle me into doubts of the motive of it, but satisfied a patient expectation and fulfilled a logical inference. Thus it did not present itself to my mind as a caprice of power, to be followed perhaps by

an onslaught on Belgium, and an invasion of England. These things were out of the beat; and *are*. There may follow Hungarian, Polish, or other questions — but there won't follow an English question unless the English *make* it, which, I grieve to think, looks every day less impossible.

Dear Mr. F., have you read 'La Fin des Traités,' written, some of it, by L. N.'s own hand? Do you consider About's 'Carte de l'Europe' (as the 'Times' does) 'a dull *jeu d'esprit*?' The wit isn't dull, and the serious intention, hid in those mummy wrappings, is not inauthentic. Official — certainly not; but Napoleonic — yes. I believe so. And I seem to myself to have strong reasons.

But you are sorry that Cavour loves popularity in England. I cried rather bitterly, 'Better so!' A complete injustice comes to nearly the same thing as a complete justice. Have we not watched for a year while every saddle of iniquity has been tried on the Napoleonic back, and nothing fitted? Wasn't he to crush Piedmontese institutions like so many egg-shells? Was he ever going away with his army, and hadn't he occupied houses in Genoa with an intention of bombarding the city? Didn't he keep troops in the north after Villafranca on purpose to come down on us with a Grand Duke at best, or otherwise with a swamping Kingdom of Etruria and Plon-Plon to rule it? and wouldn't he give back Bologna to the Pope bound by seven devils fiercer than the first, and prove Austria bettered by Solferino? Also, were not Cipriani, Farini, and other patriots, his 'mere creatures' in treacherous correspondence with the Tuileries; 'doing his dirty work,' 'keeping things in suspense' till destruction should arrange itself on falsehood? Have I not read and heard from the most intelligent English journals, and the best-informed English politicians (men with one foot and two ears in the Cabinet) these true things written and repeated, and watched while they died out into the Vast Inane and Immense Absurd from which they were born?

So I would rather have a rounded, complete injustice, as we can't have the complete justice. After all, the thing done is only a nation saved. Hurry up the men who did it on the same cord! Ought not Cavour to be there?

And if the Savoy cession is a crime, he is criminal, he, who undeniably from the beginning contemplated it, not as the price of the war, but as the condition of a newly constituted Italy. And the condition implies more than is understood, more than the consenting parties dare to confess — can at present afford to confess — unless I am deceived by information, which has hitherto justified itself in the event. Be patient with me one moment — for if I differ from you, I seem to have access to another class of facts than you see. If Italy, for instance, expands itself to a nation of twenty-six millions, would you blame the Emperor who 'did it all' (Cavour's own phrase) for providing an answer to his own people in some small foresight about the frontier, when in the course of fifty or a hundred years they may reproach his memory with the existence of an oppressive rival or enemy next door? Mr. Russell said to me last January 'Everything that comes out proves the Emperor to have acted towards Italy like an Italian rather than a Frenchman.' At which we applaud; that is, you, and Mr. R., and I, and the Italians generally applaud. But — let us be just — *that* would not be a satisfactory opinion in France of the Head of the State, would it, do you think? It was obviously his duty not to be negligent of certain eventualities in the case of his own country, to be a 'Frenchman' *there*.

Oh, Savoy has given me pain; and I would rather for the world's sake that a great action had remained out of reach of the hypothetical whispers of depreciators. I would rather not hear Robert say, for instance: 'It was a great action; but he has taken eighteenpence for it, which is a pity.' I don't think this judgment fair — and much worse judgments are passed than that, which is very painful. But, after all, this thing may have been a necessary duty

on L. N.'s part, and I can understand that it was so. For this loss of the Italians, *that* is not to be dwelt on; while for the Savoyards, none knew better than Cavour (not even L. N.) the leaning of those populations towards France for years back; it has been an inconvenient element of his government. Whether there are or are not natural frontiers, there are natural barriers, and the Alps hinder trade and make direct influence difficult; and what the popular vote would be nobody here doubted. Be sure that nobody did in Switzerland. The Swiss have been insincere, it seems to me — talking of terror when they thought chiefly of territory. But I feel tenderly for poor heroic Garibaldi, who has suffered, he and his minority. He is not a man of much brain; which makes the subject the more cruel to him. But I can't write of Garibaldi this morning, so anxious we are after an unpleasant dispatch yesterday. He is a hero, and has led a forlorn hope out to Sicily, to succeed for Italy, or to fail for himself. It's 'imprudence,' if he fails: if otherwise, who shall praise him enough? it's salvation and glory.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome], 28 Via del Tritone: May 18, 1860 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — It seems to me that you have drunk so much England, which cheers *and* inebriates, as to have forgotten your Italian friends. Here have I been waiting with my load of gratitude, till my shoulders ache under it, not knowing to what address to carry it! Sarianna sent me one address of your London lodgings, with the satisfactory addition that you were about to move immediately. You really *might* have written to me before, unkindest and falsest of Fannies! Or else (understand) you should not have sent me those graceful and suggestive drawings, for which only now I am able to thank you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. It was very kind of you to let me have them.

Then, pray how did you get my 'Poems before Congress?' Was I not to send you an order? Here I send one at least, whether you scorn my gift or not; and by this sign you will inherit also an 'Aurora Leigh.'

Yes, I expected nothing better from the 'British public,' which, strictly conforming itself to the higher civilisation of the age, gives sympathy only where it gives 'the belt.'[1] As the favorite hero says in his last eloquent letter, 'In all my actions, whether in private or public life, may I be worthy of having had the honor . . . *of a notice in the "Times,"*' he concludes — 'of the abuse of the "Saturday Review"' &c., &c., say *I*.

For the rest, being turned out of the old world, I fall on my feet in the new world, where people have been generous, and even publishers turned liberal. Think of my having an offer (on the ground of that book) from a periodical in New York of a hundred dollars for every single poem, though as short as a sonnet — that is, for its merely passing through their pages on the road to the publishers proper. Oh, I shall cry aloud and boast, since people choose to abuse me. Did you see how I was treated in 'Blackwood'? In fact, you and all women, though you hated me, should be vexed on your own accounts. As for me, it's only what I expected, and I have had that deep satisfaction of 'speaking though I died for it,' which we are all apt to aspire to now and then. Do you know I was half inclined to send my little book to Mr. Cobden, and then I drew back into my shell, with native snail-shyness.

We remain here till the end of May, when we remove back to Florence. Meanwhile I am in great anxiety about

[1] The championship trophy of the prize ring. The great fight between Sayers and Heenan had just taken place (April 17, 1860), and had engrossed the interest of all England, to say nothing of America.

Sicily. Garibaldi's hardy enterprise may be followed by difficult complications.

Let us talk away from politics, which set my heart beating uncomfortably, and don't particularly amuse you. . . .

Have you read the 'Mill by the Floss,' and what of it? The author is here, they say, with her elective affinity, and is seen on the Corso walking, or in the Vatican musing. Always together. They are said to visit nobody, and to be beheld only at unawares. Theodore Parker removed to Florence in an extremity of ill-health, and is dead there. I feel very sorry. There was something high and noble about the man — though he was not deep in proportion. Hatty Hosmer has arrived in America, and found her father alive and better, but threatened with another attack which must be final. Gibson came to us yesterday, and we agreed that we never found him so interesting. I grieve to hear that Mr. Page's pictures (another Venus and a Moses) have been rejected at your Academy.

Robert deserves no reproaches, for he has been writing a good deal this winter — working at a long poem[1] which I have not seen a line of, and producing short lyrics which I *have* seen, and may declare worthy of him. For me, if I have attained anything of force and freedom by living near the oak, the better for me. But I hope you don't think that I mimic [him, or] lose my individuality. [Penini] sends his love with Robert's. [He ri]des his pony and learns his Latin and looks as pretty as ever — to my way of [thinking]. If you don't write directly, address to Florence.

[1] It is not clear what this can be. Browning published nothing between 1855 ('Men and Women') and 1864 ('Dramatis Personæ'), and there is no long poem in the latter, unless 'A Death in the Desert' and 'Sludge the Medium' may be so described. The latter is not unlikely to have been written now, when Home's performances were rampant. His next really long poem was the 'Ring and the Book,' which certainly had not yet been begun.

We have another thick Indian letter for you, but Robert is afraid of sending it till you give us a safe address.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome: about May 1860.]

[*The beginning of this letter is wanting.*]

When the English were raging about Savoy, I heard a word or two from Pantaleoni which convinced me that the Imperial wickedness did not strike him as the sin against the Holy Ghost precisely. In fact, I doubt much that he (an intimate friend of Massimo d'Azeglio) knew all about it before the war.

By the bye, why does Azeglio write against Rome being the capital just now? It seems to us all very ill-advised. Italy may hereafter select the capital she pleases, but now her game ought to be to get Rome, as an indispensable part of the play, as soon as possible. There are great difficulties in the way — that's very sure. It's quite time, indeed, that Mrs. Trollope's heart should warm a little towards the Emperor, for no ruler has risked so much for a nation to which he did not belong (unless he wished to conquer it) as Napoleon has for this nation. He has been tortuous in certain respects — in the official presentation of the points he was resolute on carrying — but from first to last there has been one steady intention — the liberation of Italy without the confusion of a general war. Moreover, his eyes are upon Venice, and have been since Villafranca. What I *see* in the very suggestion to England about stopping Garibaldi from attacking the mainland was a preparation to the English mind towards receiving the consequence of unity, namely, the seizure of Venice. 'You must be prepared for that. You see where you are going? You won't cry out when France joins her ally again!' Lord John didn't see the necessity. No, of course he didn't. He never does see except what he runs against.

He protested to the last (by the Blue Book) against G.'s attack; he was of opinion, to the last, that Italy would be better in two kingdoms. But he *wouldn't intervene*. In which he was perfectly right, of course, only that people should see where their road goes even when they walk straight. And mark, if France had herself prevented Garibaldi's landing, Lord John would simply have 'protested.' *He said so.* France might have done it without the least inconvenience, therefore, and she *did not.* She confined herself to observing that if V. E. *might* have Naples, he *must* have Venice, and that there could be no good in objecting to logical necessities of accepted situations. In spite of which, every sort of weight was hung on the arms of France that no aid should be given for Venetia. Certain things written to Austria, and uttered through Lord Cowley, I can't forgive Lord John for; my heart does not warm, except with rage. To think of writing only the other day to an Austrian Court: '*All we can do for you* is to use our strongest influence with France that she should not help Italy against you in Venetia. And in our opinion you will always be strong enough to baffle Italy. Italy can't fight you alone.' The words I am not sure of, but the idea is a transcript. And the threats uttered through Lord Cowley were worse — morally hideous, I think.

Napoleon's position in France is hard enough of itself. Forty thousand priests, with bishops of the colour of Mon. d'Orleans and company, having, of course, a certain hold on the agricultural population which forms so large a part of the basis of the imperial throne. Then add to that the parties — the 'Liberals' (so called) and others, who use this question as a weapon simply. In the Senate and Legislative Body they haven't forgotten how to talk, have they — these French. The passion and confusion seem to have been extreme. After all, we shall get a working majority, I do hope and trust, for all the intelligent supporters of the Government are with us, and the Chamber will be dissolved at need. There is talk of it already in Rome. . . .

At last we see your advertisement. *Viva* 'Agnes Tremorne'![1] We find it in 'Orley Farm.' How admirably this last opens! We are both delighted with it. What a pity it is that so powerful and idiomatic a writer should be so incorrect grammatically and scholastically speaking! Robert insists on my putting down such phrases as these: 'The Cleeve was distant from Orley two miles, though it *could not be driven* under five.' *'One rises up the hill.'* 'As good as *him*.' 'Possessing more *acquirements* than he would have *learned* at Harrow.' *Learning acquirements!* Yes, they are faults, and should be put away by a first-rate writer like Anthony Trollope. It's always worth while to be correct. But do understand through the pedantry of these remarks that we are full of admiration for the book. The movement is so excellent and straightforward — walking like a man, and 'rising up-hill,' and not going round and round, as Thackeray has taken to do lately. He's clever always, but he goes round and round till I'm dizzy, for one, and don't know where I am. I think somebody has tied him up to a post, leaving a tether. Dearest Isa, the day before yesterday I had two letters from Madame M—— to ask us to take rooms. He is coming directly to Rome. She says he has much to tell me, and it's evident, of course, that an Italian senator, native to the Roman States, wouldn't come here just now without mission or permission. I am full of expectation, but will say no more.

Dearest Isa, have I been long in writing indeed? You see, I let so many letters accumulate which I hadn't the heart to reply to, that on taking up the account, I had over much to do in writing letters. Then I have been working a little at some Italian lyrics. Three more are gone lately to the 'Independent,' and another is ready to go. All this, with helping Pen to prepare for the Abbé, has filled my hands, and they are soon tired, my Isa, nowadays. When the sun goes down, I am down. At eight I generally am

[1] A novel by Miss Blagden.

in bed, or little after. And people will come in occasionally in the day, and annul me. I had a visit from Lady Annabella Noel lately, Lord Byron's granddaughter. Very quiet, and very intense, I should say. She is going away, and I shall not see her more than that once, I dare say; but she looked at me so with her still deep eyes, and spoke so feelingly, that I kissed her when she went away. Another new acquaintance is Lady Marion Alford, the Marquis of Northampton's daughter, very eager about literature and art and Robert, for all which reasons I should care for her; also Hatty calls her divine. I thought there was the least touch of affectation of fussiness, but it may not be so. She knelt down before Hatty the other day and gave her — placed on her finger — the most splendid ring you can imagine, a ruby in the form of a heart, surrounded and crowned with diamonds. Hatty is frankly delighted, and says so with all sorts of fantastical exaggerations.

Tell me what you think of the photographs which Robert sends, with his best love. I think the head perfect, and the other very poetical and picturesque. I wish I had mine to send Kate, tell her with my dear love, but I have not one, nor can get one. Perhaps I may have to sit again before leaving Rome, and then she shall be remembered. And Robert will give her his.

Pray don't apologise for your Borden. He is very much to be liked. Mrs. Bruen is charmed. He has been three times to talk with me, and Robert has called on him twice. Robert is quite vexed at your 'pretension' about having friends not good enough for his acquaintance. Yes, really he was vexed. 'Isa *never* understood him — not she!'

Is there not reason, we may murmur? But the truth is he is always ready (be pleased to know) to honour your drafts in acquaintanceship, and chooses to be considered ready.

[*The remainder of this letter is wanting.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: June 16, 1860 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — I must use my opportunity of sending you these photographs, because I think you will care to have them. Peni is *himself*, not a likeness, but an identity. *I*, like a devil, or the Emperor Napoleon, am not as black as I seem; but Pen looks lovely enough to satisfy my vanity.

Your Indian poet's letter was despatched to you from Rome, and 'so Apollo saved me.' Oh — if you knew how I hate giving opinions! I think a poet's opinion of another poet should be paid by some triple fee. I, at least, always feel that after being ingenuous on these occasions and advising persons who can barely spell against publishing their epic poems, one is supposed to be secretly influenced by the fear of a rival or worse. Give me a triple fee.

Poor dearest Fanny, of course you are in the chain, being in England. You are moved to set down the Emperor as 'the Beast' 666, of course. If he crushes 'Garibaldi you must give him up.' Yes; but what an If. If you stab Miss Heaton with a golden bodkin, right through the heart, under circumstances of peculiar cruelty, I shall have to give up *you*. If I bake Penini in a pie and eat him, you'll have to give up me.

The Emperor Napoleon is faithful and will be faithful to the Italian cause, and to the cause of the nationalities, as long as and wherever it is prudent, for the general interest; possible without dangerous complications. He has risked enough for it, to be trusted a little I think — his life and dynasty certainly. At this moment I hear from Rome of a great dinner given by Lamoricière to his staff, or by his staff to him (I don't know which), only that the health of *Henri cinq* was suggested and drank at it. Gorgon telegraphed the news to Paris. What then? English newspapers (even such

papers as the 'Daily News') have stated that Lamoricière was doing Napoleonic business at Rome. Perhaps this is of it.

Chapman junior is in Florence (doing business upon Lever I believe), and he maintains that I have done myself no mortal harm by the Congress poems, which incline to a second edition after all. Had it been otherwise I yet never should have repented speaking the word out of me which burnt in me. Printing that book did me real good. For the rest, 'Aurora Leigh' is in the press for a *fifth* edition. Read the 'Word for Truth by a Seaman,' written by a naval officer of high reputation.

We left Rome on the 4th of June, and travelled by vettura through Orvieto and Chiusi. Beautiful scenery, interesting pictures and tombs, but a fatiguing journey. At least, Pen's pony and I were both of us unusually fatigued, and scarcely, at the end of a week, am I myself yet. I am not as strong since my illness last summer. We stay here till the early part of July and then remove to Siena, to the villa we had last year; and there Pen keeps tryst with his Abbé and the Latin. He has made great progress this winter in Latin and much besides, and he isn't going to be a 'wretched little Papist,' as some of our friends precipitately conclude from the fact of his having a priest for a tutor. Indeed Pen has to be restrained into politeness and tolerance towards ecclesiastical dignities. Think of his addressing his instructor (who complained of the weather at Rome one morning), thus — in choice Tuscan: — 'Of course it's the excommunication. The prophet says that a curse begins with the curser's own house; and so it is with the Holy Father's curse.' Wasn't that clever of Pen? and impertinent, but our Abbé only tried at gravity; he sympathises secretly with the insorgimento d'Italia, and besides is very fond of Pen. Poor Pen, 'innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,' how his mama has been wickedly cursing her native country (after Chorley)! It's hard upon me, Fanny, that

you won't tell me of the spirits, you who can see. Here is even Robert, whose heart softens to the point of letting me have the 'Spiritual Magazine' from England. Do knock at Mrs. Milner Gibson's doors till you get to see the 'hands' and the 'heads' and the 'bodies' and the 'celestial garlands' which she has the privilege of being familiar with. *Touch* the hands. Has Mr. Monckton Milnes seen anything so as to believe? Is it true that Lord Lyndhurst was lifted up in a chair? Does he believe? I hear through Mr. Trollope and Chapman that Edwin Landseer has received the faith, and did everything possible to persuade Dickens to investigate, which Dickens refused. Afraid of the truth, of course, having deeply committed himself to negatives. This is a moral *lâcheté*, hard for my feminine mind to conceive of. Dickens, too, who is so fond of ghost-stories, as long as they are impossible. . . .

I can scarcely imagine the summer's passing without a struggle on the continent of Italy. It can't be, I think. At least we are prepared for it here.

We find Wilson well. Mr. Landor also. He had thrown a dinner out of the window only once, and a few things of the kind, but he lives in a chronic state of ingratitude to the whole world except Robert, who waits for his turn. I am glad to think that poor Mr. Landor is well; unsympathetical to me as he is in his *morale*. He has the most beautiful sea-foam of a beard you ever saw, all in a curl and white bubblement of beauty. He informed us the other morning that he had 'quite given up thinking of a future state — he had *had* thoughts of it once, but that was very early in life.' Mr. Kirkup (who is deafer than a post now) tries in vain to convert him to the spiritual doctrine. Landor laughs so loud in reply that Kirkup hears him.

Pray keep Mr. —— off till we have settled the independence and unity of Italy. It isn't the hour for peace, and we don't want a second Villafranca. By the way, I dare say nobody in England lays his face in the dust and acknow-

ledges, in consequence of the official declaration of the Prussian Minister (to the effect that Prussia was to attack on the crossing of the Mincio, and that nothing but the unexpected conclusion of hostilities hindered the general war) — acknowledges that Napoleon stands fully justified in making that peace. I cannot expect so much justice in an Englishman. He would rather bury his past mistake in a present mistake than simply confess it.

Now no more. May God bless you. Do be happy, and do write to me. We talk of Paris and England for next year.

Your very affectionate

BA.

Robert's love and Pen's.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about June 1860.]

I didn't write last time, dearest Sarianna, not only because of being over-busy or over-tired, but because I had not the heart that day. Peni had another touch of fever, and was forced to have a doctor and cataplasms to his feet. It was only a day's anxiety, but I didn't like writing just then. He had been in the sun or the wind or something. I was glad to get away from Rome. There were two cases of fever in our courtyard, and both the sun and the shade were *suspectés*. As far as Pen is concerned, the evil was averted, and I assure you he is looking in the full bloom of health, and we have been congratulated on all sides on his appearance and growth since we returned to Florence. Riding so much has agreed well with him; and the general results of the Roman campaign cannot be said to be otherwise than favourable. Set down as much for Robert. Everybody exclaims at his stoutness. In fact, never since I have known him has he condescended to put on such an air of *robustness*, there's no other word for it.

Shall we give the glory to Rome, or to *nux*, to which he is constant. For two years and a half he has had recourse to no other remedy, and it has not yet failed to produce its effect. How do you unbelievers account for that? At the same time, I never would think of using it in any active or inflammatory malady, and where a sudden revolution or *scosso* is required from the remedial agent.

We find poor Mr. Landor tolerably amenable to Wilson, and well in health, though he can't live more than three months, he says, and except when Robert keeps him soothed by quoting his own works to him, considers himself in a very wretched condition, which is a sort of satisfaction too. He is a man of great genius, and we owe him every attention on that ground. Otherwise I confess to you he is to me eminently unsympathetic. . . .

If—— 'turns Catholic,' as you say, on the ground of the organisation of certain institutions, it will be a proof of very peculiar ignorance. This power of organisation is *French*, and not Catholic. You look for it in vain in Rome, for instance, except where the organisation comes from France. The *sœurs de charité*, who are of all Catholic nations, are organised entirely by the French. The institutions here are branch institutions. In Rome the tendency of everything is to confusion and 'individuality' with separate pockets. Lamoricière was in despair at it all, and even now people talk of his resigning, though he gave a dinner the other day to his staff, with the toast of '*Henri cinq*.'

Individuality is an excellent thing in its place, and an infamous thing out of it. In England we have some very successful efforts at organisation — the post office, which is nearly perfect, and society, in which the demarcation between class and class is much too perfect to be humane. In other respects we are apt to fail.

We do not fail, however, in organisation only with regard to these charitable institutions. We are very hard and unsympathetic in them. A distinguished woman has been

here lately — a Miss Cobbe (a fellow-worker with Miss Carpenter) — who, having overworked herself, was forced by her physician to come here for three months and rest, under dire penalties. She went to Isa Blagden's, and returned to England and her work just now. She is very acute, and so perfectly without Continental prejudices, that she didn't pretend to much interest even in our Italian movement, having her heart in England and with the poor. But she was much struck, not merely with the order of foreign institutions, but with their superior tenderness and sympathy. The account she gave of the English workhouses and hospitals was very sad, very cruel, corresponding, in fact, to what I have heard from other quarters.

Ah, Sarianna, 'charming old men' who call the Tuscans angels, except that they lie (what an exception!), can be mistaken like others. *That* passes for 'liberality,' does it? We are not angels, and we don't lie — there's no more lying in Italy than in England, I begin to affirm. Also, M. Tassinari was in prison, not a week but a month — and well did he deserve it. We deal now in French coinage, and are to see no more pauls after the middle of next month. Robert thinks it will destroy the last vestige of our cheapness, but I am very favorable to a unification of international coinage. It agrees with my theories, you know.

We are all talking and dreaming Garibaldi just now in great anxiety. Scarcely since the world was a world has there been such a feat of arms. All modern heroes grow pale before him. It was necessary, however, for us all even here, and at Turin just as in Paris, to be ready to disavow him. The whole good of Central Italy was hazarded by it. If it had not been success it would have been an evil beyond failure. The enterprise was forlorner than a forlorn hope. The hero, if he had perished, would scarcely have been sure of his epitaph even.

And 'intervention' *does* mean quite a different thing at Naples and in Lombardy. In Lombardy there was the

foreign tyrant. At Naples Italians deal with Italians; and the Austrian influence is *indirect.* So also at Rome. It is this which makes the difficulty of dealing with Southern Italy and the difference of treatment which you observe in certain French papers.

I am sure, though you don't like photographs, you say, that you will find nothing lacking in what we send you and dearest Nonno of our Penini. It isn't like him, it's himself. As for me, I murmur in the depths of my vanity, that like the Emperor Napoleon (and the devil) I'm not so black as I'm painted; but I forgive everything for Pen's sake. Robert is not very favourably represented, I think. The beard on the upper lip had not been properly clipped, and makes the space seem too long for him. Another time I will mend that. I was very unusually tired after my journey, but am getting past it. Weather was hot; but within two days we have had some cooling rain.

Give my best love to M. Milsand, beside the photographs, and thank him for not being offended in his 'patriotism' by my Congress poems. If he approved of the preface as he says, I can't see how he can have written anything about 'intervention' which I would not accept. Nothing could have ended the intervention of Austria, except the intervention of France; and it was on that account that we feel the latter to be a great and chivalrous action. Italy is grateful. And if France were in difficulty she might count on this delivered nation, as on herself. In spite of all the bad words hurled at me in every English newspaper and periodical nearly (and I assure you I have been put in the pillory among them) the poems are going into a second edition, Chapman says, and 'Aurora Leigh' into a fifth. Also Chapman junior, who has come out here to see after Lever, smooths me down a little about Robert, and says that the sale is bettering itself, and that a new edition of the 'Poems' will soon be wanted. I just now see a pleasant notice of myself in 'Bentley's Magazine.'

Abuse of the 'Congress Poems,' of course. Then a side stroke at 'Aurora Leigh,' which was original, of course, because it's my way to stand alone and attack people; but the principal merit of which otherwise was the suggestion of 'Lucille' (Lytton's new poem) — 'Lucille,' says the critic, being superior in holiness and virtue and that sort of thing to 'Aurora'! Of course.

They subscribed in England five thousand pounds for Tom Sayers. There's the advance of civilisation. Napoleon has gone to Baden to arrange the world a little more comfortably, I hope.

Mr. Lewes and Miss Evans have been here, and are coming back to settle into our congenial bosom. I admire her books so much, that certainly I shall not refuse to receive her, though she is not a medium. Sarianna!

Your ever affectionate sister.

The programme of the previous year was repeated in 1860. Returning from Rome to Florence at the beginning of June, the Brownings in July went to Siena to avoid the extreme heat of the summer at Florence, staying as before at the Villa Alberti. Their visit to Siena was, however, rather shorter than the previous one, lasting only till September.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Browning, during all this time, was losing ground in point of health; and she now received another severe blow in the news of the serious illness of her sister Henrietta (Mrs. Surtees Cook). The anxiety lasted for several months, and ended with the death of Mrs. Cook in the following winter.

To Mrs. Martin

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 21, [1860].

I thank you, my dearest friend, from my heart for your letter, and the ray of sunshine it brought with it. Do you

know I was childish enough to kiss it as if it knew what it did. I wish I could kiss *you*. Yes, I have been very unhappy, not giving way on the whole, going about my work as usual, but with a sense of a black veil between me and whatever I did, sometimes feeling incapable of crawling down to sit on the cushion under my own fig-tree for an hour's vision of this beautiful country — sometimes in 'des transes mortelles' of fear.

But we must not be atheists, as a friend said to me the other day. I hope I do not live quite as if I were. But it was a great shock from the beginning. Henrietta always seemed so strong that I never feared that way.

My first impulse was to rush to England, but this has been over-ruled by everybody, and I believe wisely. With my usual luck I should just have increased the sum of evil instead of bringing a single advantage to anyone. The best thing I can do for the others, is to keep quiet and try not to give cause for trouble on my account, to be patient and live on God's daily bread from day to day. I had a crumb or two the day before yesterday through Storm, who thought there might be a little less pain — and here you have sent me almost a slice — may God be thanked! How good you were to mention the doctor! It is grievous to me to think of her suffering. Darling!

I knew how strong your sympathy and personal feeling would be, and, even on that account, I had not the heart and courage to write to you. But no, dearest friends, I did not receive the letter you speak of, though I heard of your grief a good while afterwards. And so sorry I was — we both were — so sorry for Fanny, so sorry for you! May God bless you all! How the spiritual world gets thronged to us with familiar faces, till at last, perhaps, the world here will seem the vague and strange world, even while we remain.

Still, it is beautiful out of this window; and of public affairs in Italy, I am stirred to think with the most vivid

interest through all. The rapture is not as in the northern war last year, because (you don't understand that in England) last year we fought the Austrian and now it is Italian against Italian,[1] which tempers every triumph with a certain melancholy. Also the Italian question in the south was decided in the north, and remained only a question of time, abbreviated (many think rashly) by our hero Garibaldi. For the crisis, so quickened, involves very serious dangers and most solemn thoughts. The southern difficulty may be considered solved — so we think — but just now that very solution opens out, as we all fear a new Austrian invasion in the north, backed indirectly at least by Prussia and Germany, who will use the opportunity in carrying out the coalition against France. There seems no doubt of the mischief hatched at Toeplitz. I wish I had known that England's influence was not used in drawing together those two powers. Prussia deserves to be —— what shall I say? — docked of her Rhenish provinces? It would be a too slight punishment. She caused the Villafranca halt (according to her official confession by the mouth of Baron Schleinitz, last spring), and now this second time, would she interrupt the liberation of Italy? The aspect of affairs looks very grave. As to England, England wishes well to this country at this present time, but *she will make no sacrifices* (not even of her hatreds, least of all, perhaps, of her blind hatreds), for the sake of ten Italys. Tell dear Mr. Martin that after the speech for the Defences, I gave up Lord Palmerston for ever. He plays double. He is too shrewd to believe in the probability of invasions, &c., &c., but he wants a shield to guard his sword-arm. The statesmanship of England pines for new blood, for ideas of the epoch, and the Russell old-fogyism will not do any more at all. These old bottles won't hold the new wine. People

[1] Garibaldi was now engaged in his Neapolitan campaign. Sicily (except Messina) had been cleared of the Neapolitan troops by the end of July, and on August 19 Garibaldi had landed in Calabria.

are positively calling on the Muse and William Pitt. It's religion to hate France, and to set up a 'Boney' as a 'raw head and bloody bones' sort of scarecrow. But it won't do. As the Revolutionists say, 'È troppo tardi.'

I am not, however, in furies all day, dearest Mrs. Martin. (I answer satisfactorily your question whether I am 'ever calm.') The newspapers from various parts of Italy thunder down on us here, not to speak of 'Galignanis' and 'Saturday Reviews.' See how calm-blooded I must be to bear the 'Saturday Review.' (I consider it a curiosity in vice, certainly.) Then we have books from the subscription library in Florence, and sights of the 'Cornhill,' and political pamphlets by the book post; nay, even the 'Spiritual Magazine,' sent by Chapman and Hall, in the last number of which that clever and brave William Howitt (who, like a man, is foolish sometimes) suggests gravely in an article that I have lately been 'biologised by infernal spirits,' in order to the production of certain bad works in the service of 'Moloch,' meaning, of course, L. N. Oh! and did anyone tell you how Harriet Martineau, in her political letters to America, set me down with her air of serene superiority? But such things never chafe me — never. They don't even quicken my pulsation. And the place we are passing the summer in is very calm — a great lonely villa, in the midst of purple hills and vineyards, olive-trees and fig-trees like forest-trees; a deep soothing silence. A mile off we have friends, and my dear friend Miss Blagden is in a villa half a mile off. This for the summer. Also, we brought with us from Florence and dropped in a villino not far, our friend Mr. Landor (Walter Savage), who is under Robert's guardianship, having quarrelled with everybody in and out of England. I call him our adopted son. (You did not know I had a son of eighty-six and more.) Wilson lives with him, and Robert receives from his family in England means for his support. But really the office is hard, and I tell Robert that he must be prepared for the consequences:

an outbreak and a printed statement that he (Robert), instigated by his wicked wife, had attempted to poison him (Landor) slowly. Such an extraordinary union of great literary gifts and incapacity of will has seldom surprised the world. Of course he does not live with us, you know, either here or in Florence, but my husband manages every detail of his life, and both the responsibility and trouble are considerable. Still he is a great writer. We owe him some gratitude therefore.

Penini has his pony here, and rides with his father. We have had the coolest summer I ever remember in Italy. I *could* have been very happy. But God, who 'tempers the wind,' finds it necessary for the welfare of some of us to temper the sunshine also. . . .

As the very poorest proof of gratitude for your letter, Robert suggests that I should enclose this photograph of Penini and myself taken at Rome this last spring. You will like to have them, we fancy, but it is Robert's gift. I was half inclined last year to send you a photograph from Field Talfourd's picture of me,[1] but I shrank back, knowing that dear Mr. Martin would cry out at the flattery of it, which he well might do. But this photograph from nature can't be flattered, so I hazard it. You see the locks are dark still, not white, and the sun, in spite, has blackened the face to complete the harmony. Pen is very like, and very sweet we think.

Do, when you write, speak of yourself — yourselves. I hope you like the 'Mill on the Floss.'

Our love to dearest Mr. Martin and you.

Let me be as ever,

Your affectionate and grateful

Ba.

[1] Now in the National Portrait Gallery. A reproduction of it is given as the frontispiece to vol. v. of the *Poetical Works*.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Villa Alberti, Siena, Sardegna: August 25, [1860].

My dearest Fanny, — I received your letter with thanks upon thanks. It seemed long since I heard or wrote. I have been very sad, very — with a stone hung round my heart, and a black veil between me and all that I do, think, or look at. One of my sisters is very ill in England — my married sister — an internal tumour, accompanied with considerable suffering, and doubtful enough as to its issue to keep us all (I can answer at least for myself) in great misery. Robert says I exaggerate, and I think and know that consciously or unconsciously he wants to save me pain. She went to London, and the medical man called it an anxious case. We all know what that must mean. For a little time I was in an anguish of fear, and though come to believe now that no great change any way is to be expected quickly, you would pity what I feel when the letters are at hand. May God have mercy on us all! I wanted at first to get to England, but everyone here and there was against it, and I suppose it would have been a pure selfishness on my part to persist in going, seeing that the fatigue and the cold in England alone would have broken me up to a faggot (though of not so much use as to burn) so that I should have complicated other people's difficulties, without much mending my own. Still it would have been comfort to me (however selfish) to have just held her hand. But no. Oh, I am resigned to its being wiser. I am shaken, even at this distance. She has three children younger than my Peni. Don't let me talk of it any more.

You see, Fanny, my 'destiny' has always been to be entirely useless to the people I should like to help (except to my little Pen sometimes in pushing him through his lessons, and even so the help seems doubtful, scholastically speaking, to Robert!) and to have only power at the end of

my pen, and for the help of people I don't care for. At moments lately, thanks from a stranger for this or that have sounded ghastly to me who can't go to smooth a pillow for my own darling sister. Now, I *won't* talk of it any more. After all I try to be patient and wait quietly, and there ought to be hope and faith meantime.

The pen-utilities themselves don't pass uncontested, as you observe. Yes, I see the 'Spiritual Magazine,' and remarked how I was scourged in the house of my friends. Robert shouted in triumph at it, and hoped I was pleased, and as for myself, it really did make me smile a little, which was an advantage, in the sad humour I was in at the time. 'Biologised by infernal spirits since "*Casa Guidi Windows*,"' yet 'Casa Guidi Windows' was not wholly vicious it seems to me, nor 'Aurora' utterly corrupt. And Mr. Howitt is both a clever man, and an honest and brave man, for all his sweeping opinions. Biologised and be-Harrised *he* is certainly. What an extraordinary admiration! I wonder at *that* more than at any of the external spiritual phenomena. Dearest Fanny, you were very, very good and generous to take my part with the editor — but *laissez faire*. These things do one no harm — and, for me, they don't even vex me. I had an anonymous letter from England the other day, from somebody who recognised me, he said, in some prodigious way as a great Age-teacher, all but divine, I believe, and now gave me up on account of certain atrocities — first, for the poem 'Pan'[1] in the 'Cornhill' (considered *immoral!*), and then for having had my 'brain so turned by the private attentions and flatteries of the Emperor Napoleon when I was in Paris, that I have devoted myself since to help him in the gratification of his selfish ambitions.' Conceive of this, written with an air of conviction, and on the best information. Now, of the two imputations, I much prefer 'the inspiration from hell.' There's something grandiose about

[1] 'A Musical Instrument;' see p. 377, above.

that, to say nothing of the superior honesty of the position.

What a 'mountainous me' I am 'piling up' in this letter, I who want rather to write of *you*. . . .

Italy ought not to draw you just now, Fanny. We are all looking for war, and wondering where the safety is. A Piccolomini said yesterday that it was as safe at Rome as in Florence, which only proved Florence unsafe. Austria may come down on Central Italy any day; and sooner or later there must be war. The Storys are alarmed enough to avoid going back to Rome until the end of November, when things may be a little arranged. The indignation here is greatest against 'questa canaglia di Germania.' Toeplitz means mischief both against France and Italy — that is plain. The Prince of Prussia gave his 'parole de gentilhomme' meaning the word of a rascal. My poor Venice! But you will see presently, only the fear is that our fire here may flash very far. In any case, it would not be desirable for Englishmen to come southwards this year. Our plans for the winter depend entirely on circumstances. If we can go to Rome in any reasonable security, I suppose we shall go. But I have no heart for plans just now.

Dear Isa Blagden is spending the summer in a rough *cabin*, a quarter of an hour's walk from here, and Mr. Landor is hard by in the lane. This (with the Storys a mile off) makes a sort of colonisation of the country here. Otherwise it's a solitude, 'very *triste*,' say the English, not even an English church, even in the city of Siena. We get books from Florence, and newspapers from everywhere, or one couldn't get on quite well. As it is I like it very much. I like the quiet! the lying at length on a sofa, in an absolute silence, nobody speaking for hours together (Robert rides a great deal), not a chance of morning visitors, no voices under the windows. The repose would help me much, if it were not that circumstances of pain and fear walk in upon me through windows and doors, using one's own thoughts, till they

tremble. Pen has had an abbé to teach him Latin, and his pony to ride on, and he and Robert are very well and strong, thank God.

Thank you for your words on spiritualism. I have not *yet* seen the last 'Cornhill.' It pleases me that Thackeray has had the courage to maintain the facts before the public; I think *much the better of him* for doing so. Owen's book I shall try to get. There is a weak reference to the subject in the 'Saturday Review' (against it), and I see an article advertised in 'Once a Week,' all proving that the public is awaking to a consideration of the class of phenomena. *Investigation* is all I desire. The 'Spiritual Magazine' lingers so this month that I fear, and Robert hopes, something may have happened to it.

On returning to Rome for the winter, which they did about September, the Brownings found quarters at 126 Via Felice. The following letter was written shortly after the death of Mrs. Browning's sister.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome: autumn 1860.]

In one word, my dearest Fanny, I will thank you for what is said and not said, for sympathy true and tender each way. It is a great privilege to be able to talk and cry; but *I cannot*, you know. I have suffered very much, and feel tired and beaten. Now, it's all being lived down; thrown behind or pushed before, as such things must be if we *are* to live: not forgetting, not feeling any tie slackened, loving unchangeably, and believing how mere a *line* this is to overstep between the living and the dead.

Do you know, the first thing from without which did me the least good was a letter from America, from dear Mrs. Stowe. Since we parted here in the spring, neither of us had written, and she had not the least idea of my being unhappy for any reason. In fact, her thought was to con-

gratulate me on public affairs (knowing how keenly I felt about them), but her letter dwelt at length upon spiritualism. She had heard, she said, for the fifth time from her boy (the one who was drowned in that awful manner through carrying out a college jest) without any seeking on her part. She gave me a minute account of a late manifestation, not seeming to have a doubt in respect to the verity and identity of the spirit. In fact, secret things were told, reference to private papers made, the evidence was considered most satisfying. And she says that all of the communications descriptive of the *state* of that Spirit, though coming from very different mediums (some high Calvinists and others low infidels) tallied exactly. She spoke very calmly about it, with no dogmatism, but with the strongest disposition to receive the facts of the subject with all their bearings, and at whatever loss of orthodoxy or sacrifice of reputation for common sense. I have a high appreciation of her power of forming opinions, let me add to this. It is one of the most vital and growing minds I ever knew. Besides the inventive, the critical and analytical faculties are strong with her. How many women do you know who are *religious*, and yet analyse point by point what they believe in? She lives in the midst of the traditional churches, and is full of reverence by nature; and yet if you knew how fearlessly that woman has torn up the old cerements and taken note of what is a dead letter within, yet preserved her faith in essential spiritual truth, you would feel more admiration for her than even for writing 'Uncle Tom.' There are quantities of irreverent women and men who profess infidelity. But this is a woman of another order, observe, devout yet brave in the outlook for truth, and considering, not whether a thing be *sound*, but whether it be true. Her views are Swedenborgian on some points, beyond him where he departs from orthodoxy on one or two points, adhering to the orthodox creed on certain others. She used to come to me last winter and open out to me very freely, and I was much

interested in the character of her intellect. Dr. Manning tried his converting power on her. 'It might have answered,' she said, 'if one side of her mind had not confuted what the other side was receptive of.' In fact, she caught at all the beauty and truth and good of the Roman Catholic symbolism, saw what was better in it than Protestantism, and also, just as clearly, what was worse. She admired Manning immensely, and was very keen and quick in all her admirations; had no national any more than ecclesiastical prejudices; didn't take up Anglo-Saxon outcries of superiority in morals and the rest, which makes me so sick from American and English mouths. By the way (I must tell Sarianna *that* for M. Milsand!) a clever Englishwoman (married to a Frenchman) told Robert the other day that she believed in 'a special hell for the Anglo-Saxon race on account of its hypocrisy.' . . .

Meanwhile you will care for Roman news, and I have not much to tell you. I am very much in my corner, and very quiet. Robert, who has been most dear and tender and considerate to me through my trial, kept all the people off, and even now, when the door is open a little, gloomy lionesses with wounded paws don't draw the public, I thank God, and I am not much teased, if at all. Sir John Bowring came with a letter of introduction, and intimate relations with Napoleon to talk of, and he has confirmed certain views of mine which I was glad to hear confirmed by a disciple of Bentham and true liberal of distinguished intelligence. He said that nothing could be more ludicrous and fanatical than the volunteer movement in England rising out of the most incredible panic which ever arose without a reason. I only hope that if the volunteers ever have to act indeed, they may behave better than at Naples, where they left the worst impression of English morals and discipline. They embarked to return home dead drunk all of them, and the drunkenness was not the worst. Sir John Bowring has been ill since he came, so perhaps he may go

before I see him again. Then Madame Swab [Schwabe], whom I slightly knew in Paris, has been with me to-day, talking on Italian affairs. There is room for anxiety about the Neapolitans; but don't believe in exaggerations: we shall do better than our enemies desire. There will be war probably. . . .

Robert has taken to modelling under Mr. Story (at his studio) and is making extraordinary progress, turning to account his studies on anatomy. He has copied already two busts, the Young Augustus and the Psyche, and is engaged on another, enchanted with his new trade, working six hours a day. In the evening he generally goes out as a bachelor — free from responsibility of crinoline — while I go early to bed, too happy to have him a little amused. In Florence he never goes anywhere, you know; even here this winter he has had too much gloom about him by far. But he looks entirely well — as does Penini. I am weak and languid. I struggle hard to live on. I wish to live just as long as and no longer than to grow in the soul.

May God bless you, dearest Fanny. Write.

America is making me very anxious just know. If they compromise in the north it is a moral death, but a merely physical dissolution of the States would be followed by a resurrection 'in honor,' and I should not fear. What are you painting?

Your affectionate as ever

BA.

Did you see Lacordaire received? Those are things I care to see in Paris, wishing, however, to Guizot, the king of Prussia, and all prigs, the contempt they deserve.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, [Rome]:
Monday, [November–December 1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — How you grieve me by this news of your being unwell. Dear, I wondered at having no letter,

and now with the letter and all the proofs of your remembering me (newspaper and pens) comes the bad word of your being ill. . . .

I myself am not very well. I thought I was going to have a bad attack of the oppression, but this morning it seems to have almost gone, and without a blister! I had one night very bad. Probably a sudden call from the tramontana brought it; even frost we had. Only, on the whole, and considering accounts from other places, Rome has distinguished itself for mildness this year; and I hope I shall keep from bad attacks, having not much strength in body, nerve, or spirit to bear up resistingly against them. . . .

Sir John Bowring has been to see us. Yes, he speaks with great authority and conviction, and it carries the more emphasis because he is not without antigallican prejudice, I observed. He told me that the panic in England about invasion had reached, at one time, a point of phrenzy which would be scarcely credible to anyone who had not witnessed it. People were in terrors, expecting their houses to be burnt and sacked directly. Placards of the most inflammatory character, calling passionately on the riflemen to arm, arm, arm! He himself was hissed at Edinburgh for venturing to say that the rifle-locks would be very rusty if only used against invading Napoleons.

He told me that the Emperor's intentions towards Italy had been undeviatingly ignored, and that whatever had seemed equivocal had been misunderstood, or was the consequence of misunderstanding, or of the press of some otherwise great difficulty. The Italian question was only beginning to be understood in England. I said (in my sarcastic way) that at first they had seemed to understand it upside down. To which he replied that when, at the opening of the Revolution, he came over with several English officers from India, they were *all prepared* (in case England didn't fight on the Hapsburgh side) to enter the Austrian army as volunteers to help them to keep down Italy.

But men like Mr. Trollope find it easy to ignore all this. It is we who have done the most for Italy — we who did nothing! Yes, I admit so far. We abstained from helping the Austrians with an open force.

That now we wish well to the Italian cause is true, I hope, but, at best, it is a noble inconsistency; and that we should set up a claim to a nation's gratitude on these grounds seems to me worse than absurd. The more we are in earnest now, the more ashamed we should be for what has been.

I have been sorry about Gaeta;[1] but there is somewhere a cause, and, perhaps, not hard to find. That the Emperor is ready to do for Italy *whatever will not sacrifice France*, I am convinced more than ever. And even the Romans (who have benefited least) think so. One of the patriots here, a watchmaker, was saying to Ferdinando the other day that he had subscribed to Garibaldi's fund, and had given his name for Viterbo,[2] but that there was one man in whom he believed most, and never ceased to believe — Louis Napoleon. And this is the common feeling. Mr. Trollope said that they only ventured to unbosom themselves to the English. Now my belief is that the Italians seldom do this to the English, as far as Napoleon is concerned. The Italians are *furbi assai*, and wish to conciliate us, and are perfectly aware of our national jealousies. I myself have observed the difference in an Italian when

[1] Gaeta, the last remaining stronghold of the Neapolitan Government, was besieged by the Italian forces from November to January. During the first two months of the siege the French fleet prevented the Italians from operating against it by sea, and it was ultimately through the intervention of the English Government that Napoleon was persuaded to withdraw his ships.

[2] Viterbo had declared for the Italian government, but had been occupied by French troops on behalf of the Pope. Many of the inhabitants left it, and a body of Italian volunteers entered the country in support of them. It is presumably to this movement that the passage in the text refers.

speaking to my own husband before me and speaking to me alone.

Since we came here I have had a letter from Ruskin, written in a very desponding state about his work, and life, and the world. . . .

Life goes on heavily with me, but it goes on: it has rolled into the ruts again and goes. . . .

Write to me, my Isa, and love me.

I am your ever loving BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome: November–December [1860.]

. . . Now while I remember it let me tell you what I quite forgot yesterday. If through Kate's dealing with American papers you get to hear of a lyric of mine called 'De Profundis,'[1] you are to understand that it was written by me nearly twenty years ago, *before I knew Robert;* you will observe it is in my 'early manner,' as they say of painters. It is a personal poem, of course, but was written even so, in comparatively a state of retrospect, catching a grief in the rebound a little. (You know I never *can* speak or cry, so it isn't likely I should write verses.) The poem (written, however, when I was very low) lay unprinted all those years, till it turned up at Florence just when poor Mrs. Howard's bereavement and Mr. Beecher's funeral sermon in the 'Independent' suggested the thought of it — on which, by an impulse, I enclosed it to the editor, who wanted more verses from me. Now you see it comes out just when people will suppose the motive to be an actual occasion connected with myself. Don't let anyone think so, dear Isa. In the first place, there would be great

[1] *Poetical Works*, v. 3. The poem evidently refers to the loss of her brother Edward, but might be supposed (being published at this moment) to refer to the death of her sister Henrietta, shortly after which this letter was evidently written.

exaggeration; and in the second, it's not my way to grind up my green griefs to make bread of. But that poem exaggerates nothing — represents a condition from which the writer had already partly emerged, after the greatest suffering; the only time in which I have known what absolute *despair* is.

Don't notice this when you write.

Write. Take the love of us three. Yes, I love you, dearest Isa, and shall for ever.

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Friday, [about December 1860].

I have not had courage to write, my dearest friend, but you will not have been severe on me. I have suffered very much — from suspense as well as from certainty. If I could open my heart to you it would please me that your sympathy should see all; but I can't write, and I couldn't speak of that. It is well for those who in their griefs *can* speak and write. I never could.

But to you after all it is not needful. You understand and have understood.

My husband has been very good to me, and saved me all he could, so that I have had solitude and quiet, and time to get into the ruts of the world again where one has to wheel on till the road ends. In this respect it has been an advantage being at Rome rather than Florence. Now I can read, and have seen a few faces. One must live; and the only way is to look away from oneself into the larger and higher circle of life in which the merely personal grief or joy forgets itself.

For the rest even I ought to have comfort, I know. I believe that love in its most human relations is an eternal thing. I do believe it, only through inconsistency and much weakness I falter.

Also there are other beliefs with me with regard to the spiritual world and the measuring of death, which ought, if I had ordinary logic, to rescue me from what people in general suffer in circumstances like these. Only I am weak and foolish; and when the tender past came back to me day by day, I have dropped down before it as one inconsolable.

Dearest Mr. Martin — give him my grateful love for every kind thought, and to yourself.

Now that page is turned.

I wish I knew that you were stronger, and at Pau. It is unfortunate that just on this bitter winter you have been unable to get away from England.

Here, though there was snow once, we have fared mildly as to climate. And our rooms are very warm. Penini has his pony and rides, and studies with his Abbé, and looks very rosy and well. I help him to prepare his lessons, but that is all, except hearing him read a little German now and then, and Robert sees to the music, and the getting up of the arithmetic. For the first time I have had pain in looking into his face lately — which you will understand.

I saw a man from Naples two days since, an Englishman of intelligence and impartiality, who has resided there for months in the heart of the politics. He told me that the exaggeration of evils was great. Evils there were certainly; and no government succeeding Garibaldi's could have satisfied a public trained to expect the impossible. Our poor Garibaldi, hero as he is, and an honest hero, is in truth the weakest and most malleable of men, and had become at last the mere mouthpiece of the Mazzinians. If the Bourbons' fall had not been a little delayed, north and south Italy would have broken in two. So I was assured by my friend, who gave reasons and showed facts.

That the Neapolitans are not equal to the other Italians is too plain; and if corrupt governments did not corrupt the government they would be less hateful to all of

us, of course. But a little time will give smoothness to the affairs of Italy, and none of my old hopes are in the meanwhile disturbed.

The design as to Rome seems to be to starve out the hope by the financial question; to let the rotten fruit fall at last as much by its own fault as possible, and by the gentlest shake of the tree. I hear of those who doubted most in the Emperor's designs beginning to confess that he can't mean ill by Italy.

Possibly you and dear Mr. Martin think more just now of America than of this country, which I can understand. The crisis has come earlier than anyone expected. It is a crisis; and if the north accepts such a compromise as has been proposed the nation perishes morally, which would be sadder than the mere dissolution of States, however sad. It is the difference between the death of the soul and of the body.

There might and ought to be a pecuniary compromise; but a compromise of principle would be fatal.

I am anxious that before we go too far with the Minghetti project here (separate administration of provinces) we should learn from America that a certain degree of centralisation (not carried out too far) is necessary to a strong and vital government. And Italy will want a strong government for some years to come. There is much talk of war in the spring, and if Austria will not cede Venetia war must be, even if she should satisfy her other provinces, which she will probably fail to do.

This is a dull lecture, but you will pardon it and me.

I know all your goodness and sympathy. Do not think that *I* think that *any bond is broken*, or that anything is lost. We have been fed on the hillside, and now there are twelve baskets full of fragments remaining.

May God bless you and love you both!

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, Rome: Tuesday, [January 1861].

Ever dearest Isa, — I wrote a long letter, which you have received, I do hope, and am waiting for a long one from you to tell me that you are not suffering any more. This is on business merely — that is, it is merely to give you trouble, the customary way for me to do business in these latter days. Will you, dear, without putting yourself to too much inconvenience by overhaste, direct the 'Nazione' people to send the journal, to which we must subscribe for three months, to *S. E. le Général Comte de Noue, Comandante della piazza di Roma. No other name.* The General, who can do what he pleases, pleases to receive our paper (our kind Abbé mediating) on condition that we do not talk of it, and so at last I shall attain to getting out of this dark into the free upper air. It is insufferable to be instructed by the 'Giornale di Roma' as to how Cialdini writes to Turin that his Piedmontese are perfectly demoralised, and that the besieged dance for triumph each time an Italian cannon is fired into the vague. On the other hand, I hear regularly every morning from the Romans that Gaeta is taken,[1] with the most minute particulars, which altogether is exasperating. The last rumour is of typhus fever in the fortress, but I have grown sceptical, and believe nothing on either side now. One thing is clear, that it wasn't only the French fleet which prevented our triumph. . . .

Robert came home this morning between three and four. A great ball at Mrs. Hooker's — magnificent, he says. All the princes in Rome (and even cardinals) present. The rooms are splendid, and the preparations were in the best taste. The princess Ruspoli (a Buonaparte) appeared in the tricolor. She is most beautiful, Robert says.

So you see our Americans can dance even while the

[1] Gaeta fell on January 15, 1861.

Republic goes to pieces. I think I would not do it. Not that I despair of America — God forbid! If the North will be faithful to its conscience there will be only an increase of greatness after a few years, even though it may rain blood betwixt then and now. Mr. Story takes it all very quietly. He would be content to let the South go, and accept the isolation of the North as final. 'We should do better without the South,' said he. I don't agree in this. I think that the unity of the State should be asserted with a strong hand, and the South forced to pay taxes and submit to law.

Mdme. Swab [Schwabe] told me that a friend of hers had travelled with Klapka from Constantinople, and that K. had said, 'there would not be war till next year, — diplomacy would take its course for the present year.' Perhaps he did not speak sincerely. I can't understand how the Austrian provinces will hold out in mere talk for twelve months more. Do you mark the tone of the 'Opinion Nationale' on Austria, and about Hungary being a natural ally of France, and also what is said in the 'Morning Chronicle,' which always more or less reflects the face of the French Government? Then it seems to me that the Emperor's speech is not eminently pacific, though he 'desires peace.' I hear from rather good authority what I hope is possible, that Teliki accepted as a condition of his liberation, not simply that he would not personally act against Austria, but that he would use his endeavours to prevent any action on the part of his compatriots. Men are base.

Mr. Prinsep[1] is here. Last autumn he made a walking tour into Cornwall with Alfred Tennyson, to tread in the steps of King Arthur. Tennyson was dreadfully afraid of being recognised and mobbed, and desired to be called 'the other gentleman,' which straightway became convertible now and then into 'the old gentleman,' much to his

[1] Mr. Val. Prinsep, R.A.

vexation. But Mr. Prinsep is in the roses and lilies of youth, and comparatively speaking, of course, the great Laureate was an ancient. He is in considerable trouble, too, by their building a fort in front of his house on the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. I couldn't help saying that he deserved it for having written 'Riflemen, arm!' It's a piece of pure poetical justice, really.

Here I end.

Write to me, my Isa, and do me good with your tender, warm thoughts. Do you think I have no comfort in feeling them stroke me softly through the dark and distance?

May God love you, dearest Isa!

Always your loving

Ba.

Robert's true love, and Pen's.

The weather is wonderfully warm. In fact, the winter has been very mild — milder than usual for even Rome.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Tuesday, [about January 1861].

You really astonish me, dearest Fanny, so much by your letter, that I must reply to it at once. I ask myself under what new influence (strictly clerical) is she now, that she should write so? And has she forgotten me, never read 'Aurora Leigh,' never heard of me or from me that, before 'Spiritualism' came up in America, I have been called orthodox by infidels, and heterodox by church-people; and gone on predicting to such persons as came near enough to me in speculative liberty of opinion to justify my speaking, that the present churches were in course of dissolution, and would have to be followed by a reconstruction of Christian essential verity into other than these middle-age scholastic forms. Believing in Christ's divinity, which is the life of Christianity, I believed this. Otherwise, if the end were here

— if we were to be covered over and tucked in with the Thirty-nine Articles or the like, and good-night to us for a sound sleep in 'sound doctrine' — I should fear for a revealed religion incapable of expansion according to the needs of man. What comes from God has life in it, and certainly from all the growth of living things, spiritual growth cannot be excepted. But I shun religious controversy — it is useless. I never 'disturb anybody's mind,' as it is called — let those sleep who can. If I had not known that *your* mind was broken up rather broadly by truths out of Swedenborg, I should not have mooted the subject, be sure. (Have you given up Swedenborg? this by the way.) Having done so, I am anxious to set you right about Mrs. Stowe. As the author of the most successful book printed by man or woman, perhaps I a little under-rated her. The book has genius, but did not strike *me* as it did some other readers. Her 'Sunny Memories,' I liked very little. When she came to us in Florence some years ago, I did not think I should like her, nor did Robert, but we were both of us surprised and charmed with her simplicity and earnestness. At Rome last year she brought her inner nature more in contact with mine, and I, who had looked for what one usually finds in women, was startled into much admiration and sympathy by finding in her a largeness and fearlessness of thought which, coming out of a clerical and puritan *cul-de-sac*, and combined with the most devout and reverent emotions, really is fine. So you think that since 'Uncle Tom' she has turned infidel, because of her interest in Spiritualism. Her last words to me when we parted, were, 'Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ never see one another for the last time.' That's the attitude of the mind which you stigmatise as corrupting.

With regard to 'Spiritualism,' so called, you might as well say '*books*' are dangerous, without specifying the books. Surely you *know* that every sort of doctrine is enjoined by these means, from Church of Englandism to Free Love. A

lady was with me this very morning, who was converted from infidelity to Christianity solely by these means, and I am told that thousands declare the same. As far as I am concerned, I never heard or read a single communication which impressed me in the least: what does impress me is the probability of there being communications at all. I look at the movement. What *are* these intelligences, separated yet relating and communicating? What is their state? what their aspiration? have we had part or shall we have part with them? is this the corollary of man's life on the earth? or are they unconscious echoes of his embodied soul? That anyone should admit a fact (such as a man being lifted into the air, for instance), and not be interested in it, is so foreign to the habits of my mind (which can't insulate a fact from an inference, and rest there) that I have not a word to say. Only I *see* that if this class of facts, however grotesque, be recognised among thinkers, our reigning philosophy will modify itself; scientific men will conceive differently from Humboldt (for instance) of the mystery of life; the materialism which stifles the higher instincts of men will be dislodged, and the rationalism which divides Oxford with Romanism (*nothing between*, we hear!) will receive a blow.

No truth can be dangerous. What if Jesus Christ be taken for a medium, do you say? Well, what then? As perfect man, He possessed, I conclude, the full complement of a man's faculties. But if He walked on the sea as a medium, if the virtue went out of Him as a mesmeriser, He also spoke the words which never man spoke, was born for us, and died for us, and rose from the dead as the Lord God our Saviour. But the whole theory of spiritualism, all the phenomena, are strikingly *confirmatory* of revelation; nothing strikes me more than that. Hume's argument against miracles (a strong argument) disappears before it, and Strauss's conclusions from *a priori* assertion of impossibility fall in pieces at once.

Now I have done with this subject. Upon the whole, it seems to me better really that you should not mix yourself up with it any more. Also I wish you joy of the dismissal of M. Pierart. There was no harm that he took away your headache, if he did not presume on that. You tell me not to bid you to beware of counting on us in Paris. And yet, dearest Fanny, I must. The future in this shifting world, what is it? As for me, whom you recognise as 'so much myself,' dear, I have a stout pen, and, till its last blot, it will write, perhaps, with its 'usual insolence' (as a friend once said), but if you laid your hand on this heart, you would feel how it stops, and staggers, and fails. I have not been out yet, and am languid in spirits, I gather myself up by fits and starts, and then fall back. Do you know, I think with positive terror sometimes, less of the journey than of having to speak and look at people. If it were possible to persuade Robert, I should send him with Pen; but he wouldn't go alone, and he must go this year. Oh, I daresay I shall feel more up to the friction of things when once I have been out; it's stupid to give way. Also my sister Arabel talks of meeting me in France, though I might have managed that difficulty, but that Robert should see his father is absolutely necessary. Meanwhile we don't talk of it, and by May or June I shall be feeling another woman probably. . . .

So you are going to work hard in Germany: that is well. Only beware of the English periodicals. There's a rage for new periodicals, and because the 'Cornhill' answers, other speculations crowd the market, overcrowd it: there will be failures presently.

I have written a long letter when I meant to write a short one. May God keep you and love you, and make you happy. Your ever affectionate

BA.

I am anxious about America, fearing a compromise in the North. All other dangers are comparatively null.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Saturday, [about January 1861].

Ah, dearest Fanny, I can't rest without telling you that I am sorry at your receiving such an impression from my letter. May God save me from such a sin as arrogance. I have not generally a temptation to it, through knowing too well what I am myself. At the same time, I do not dispute my belief in what you have so often confessed, that you don't hold your attainments and opinions sufficiently 'irrespectively of persons.' Believing which of you, I said, 'under what new influence?' and if I said anything with too much vivacity, forgive me with that sweetness of nature which is at least as characteristic of you as the intellectual impressionability. Really I would not wound you for the world — but I myself perhaps may have been over-excitable, irritable just then, who knows? and, in fact, I *was* considerably vexed at the moment that, from anything said by me, you would infer what was so injurious and unjust to a woman like Mrs. Stowe. I named her in this relation because she struck me as a remarkable example of the compatibility of freedom of thought with reverence of sentiment. You generally get one or the other; the one excluding the other. I never considered her a deep thinker, but singularly large and unshackled, considering the associations of her life, she certainly is. When I hinted at her stepping beyond Swedenborg in certain of her ideas, I referred to her belief that the process called 'regeneration' may *commence* in certain cases beyond the grave, and in her leaning to universal salvation views, which you don't get at through Swedenborg.

For the rest, I don't think, if you will allow of my saying so, that you apprehend Swedenborg's meaning very accurately always. If Swedenborg saw sin and danger in

certain communications, for instance, why did he consider it privilege on his own part to live in the world of spirits as he did. True, he spoke of 'danger,' but it was to those who, themselves weak and unclean, did not hold 'by the Lord.' He distinctly said that in the first unfallen churches there was incessant communion, and that the 'new church,' as it grew, would approximate more and more to that earlier condition. There is a distinct prospect given in Swedenborg of an increasing aptitude in the bodies and souls of men towards communication with the Disembodied. I consider that he foresaw not only what we are seeing (if these manifestations be veritable) but greater and more frequent phenomena of the same class, — which does not in any way exclude considerable danger to some persons in the meanwhile. And do you think I doubt *that?* No indeed. Unsettled minds, especially when under affliction, will lose their balance at moments, — there is danger. It is not the occasion for passion and fanaticism of sentiment, but for calm and reasonable inquiry into facts. Let us establish the facts first, and then '*try the spirits*' as the apostle directs; afterwards remains the difficulty of assuring oneself of the personalities. I don't think you should complain of the subject being unsatisfactory to you, because you don't get 'a sublime communication,' or a characteristic evidence of some spirit known to you. Much less would satisfy *me.* But it seemed to me that the consideration of the subject disturbed you, made you uncomfortable, and that you didn't approach any conclusion, and with that impression and not because of 'contempt,' be sure, I advised you to let it rest. Why should we beat our heads against an obstacle which we can't walk through? Then your liability to influence is against you here as much as your attraction towards such high speculations is in your favour. You have an 'open mind,' yes, but you leave all the doors open, and you let people come in every now and then, and lock them, and keep them locked as long as said people stand by. The

teachings of Spiritualism are much like the teachings in the world. There are excellent things taught, and iniquitous things taught. Only the sublime communications are, as far as I know, decidedly absent. Swedenborg directs you to give no more weight to what is said by a spirit-man than by a man in the body, and there's room for the instruction. 'Heralds of Progress' on one side, 'Heralds of Light' on the other, if a right thing is said, 'judge ye.' If infidels are here, there are devout, yes, and very orthodox Christians there.

I beg to say that when I speak of 'old cerements' being put off, I pre-suppose a living body in resurrection. Also, I don't call *marriage*, for instance, an old cerement. We must distinguish. With regard to the common notion of a 'hell,' as you ask me, I don't believe in it. I don't believe in any such thing as arbitrary reward or punishment, but in consequences and logical results. That seems to me God's way of working. The scriptural phrases are simply symbolical, it seems to me, and Swedenborg helps you past the symbol. Then as to the Redemption and its mode — let us receive the thing simply. Dr. Adam Clarke, whose piety was never doubted, used to say, 'Vicarious suffering is vicarious nonsense.' Which does not hinder the fact that the suffering of the Lord was necessary, in order that we should not suffer, and that through His work and incarnation His worlds recovered the possibility of good. It comes to the same thing. The manner in which preachers analyse the Infinite, pass the Divine through a sieve, has ceased to be endurable to thinking men. You speak of Luther. We all speak of Luther. Did you ever *read* any of his theological treatises. He was a schoolman of the most scholastic sect; most offensive, most absurd, presenting my idea of 'old cerements' to the uttermost. We are entering on a Reformation far more interior than Luther's; and the misfortune is, that if we don't enter, we must drop under the lintel. Do you hear of the storms in England about 'Essays and

Reviews?' I have seen the book simply by reviews in abstract and extract. I should agree with the writers in certain things, but certainly not in all. I have no sort of sympathy with what is called 'rationalism,' which is positivism in a form. The vulgar idea of miracles being put into solution, leaves you with the higher law and spiritual causation; which the rationalists deny, and which you and I hold faithfully. But whatever one holds, free discussion has become necessary. That it is full of danger; that in consequence of it, many minds will fall into infidelity, doubt, and despair, is certain; but through this moral crisis men must pass, or the end will be worse still. That's my belief, I have seen it coming for years back.

'The hungry flock looks up and is not fed,' except with chopped hay of the schools. Go into any church in England, or out of England, and you hear men preaching 'in pattens,' walking gingerly, lest a speck of natural moisture touch a stocking; seeking what's 'sound,' not what's 'true.' Now if only on theology they must not think, there will be soon a close for theologians. Educated men disbelieve to a degree quite unsuspected. That, I know of knowledge.

No! Swedenborg does not hold the existence of *devils* in the ordinary meaning. Spiritual temptation comes, he says, through disembodied corrupt spirits, out of this or *other earths*. The word Satan, remember, he conceives to represent a company of such evil spirits.

Now in what spirit have I written all this? Gently, this time, I do hope. If you knew in what an agonised state of humiliation I am sometimes, you would not suspect me of 'despising' you? Oh no, indeed. But I am much in earnest, and can't 'prophesy smooth things,' at moments of strong conviction. Who can?

Indeed, indeed, yes. I am very anxious about what passes in Paris. Do you know that Keller's infamous discourse was *corrected by Guizot's own hand?* Mr. Pentland

(who was with the Prince of Wales) knows G. and this. He (P) has just come from Paris. He knows the 'sommités' there, and considers that though there is danger, yet on the whole the Emperor dominates the situation. Prince N.'s speech, in its general outline, was submitted to the E. and had his full sympathy, *Persigny said to* P. or in his presence. Let no one ever speak ill of Prince N. before me; I read all the seventeen columns in the 'Moniteur,' and most magnificent was the discourse. Rome is greatly excited, but hopeful. There may be delay, however.

Surely you don't think the large head of Robert bad. Why, it is exquisite. . . . I can't read over, and send this scratch that you may pardon me before you go (not to lose the post).

Sarianna says that Squires carries about his own table. In which case, I give him up. Don't *you* write.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, [Rome: early in 1861].

Dearest dear Isa, — We don't get the paper. Will you ask why? Here's a special address enclosed.

I have just heard from what seems excellent authority (*F. P.* Zanetti has been here) that a French company is to be withdrawn from Rome to-day, and that *all* the troops will be immediately withdrawn from the R.S., except Rome and Civita Vecchia. The French generals, however, were not aware of this yesterday morning, though prepared for much, and thus I can't help a certain scepticism. There is an impression in French quarters, that the delay arises from a fear of a '*coup*' on the part of Austria, if she didn't see France hereabouts. But Gorgon means to try to get away before the crisis, which isn't in his tastes at all. De Noue has gone — went yesterday.

I heard yesterday of Sir John Bowring telling somebody

that '*the time* had resolved itself now into an affair of *days*.' Still, there are people I suppose who hold fast their opinions of the antique form, like Mr. Massy Dawson, for instance, who called on me yesterday with moustaches and a bride, but otherwise unchanged. He still maintains that Napoleon will perish in defence of the papacy, and that (from first to last) he has been thwarted in Italy. 'I know that Sir John Bowring, Diomed Pantaleone, Mrs. Browning' (bowing graciously to me in that complimentary frame of body which befits disputants with female creatures) 'and other persons better informed than I am, think differently. And, in fact, if I looked only *at facts* and at the worldly circumstances of the case, I should agree with you all. But reading the "Apocalypse" as I do, I find myself before a fixed conclusion!' Imagine this, dearest Isa mine, his bride sitting in a delicate dove-coloured silk on the sofa, as tame as any dove, and not venturing to coo even. I suppose she thought it quite satisfactory. What a woman with a brain could be made to suffer under certain casualties! He quoted simply St. John and Mr. Kinglake! Mr. Kinglake plainly running a little with St. John. 'Wasn't he (Kinglake) a member of Parliament, and a lawyer?' And if his allegation wasn't true, and if Napoleon did not propose to Francis Joseph to swap Lombardy for the Rhine provinces, why was there no contradiction on the part of the French Emperor?

Now do mark the necessity of Napoleon's saying, 'I didn't really pick Mr. Jones's pocket of his best foulard last Monday — no, though it hung out a tempting end. Pray don't let the volunteers think so ill of me.'

That would have been '*like*' our Emperor — wouldn't it?

By the way, I had yesterday a crowd of people, and all at once, so that I was in a flutter of weakness, and didn't get over it quickly. Mrs. Bruen brought Miss Sewell (Amy Herbert) and Lady Juliana Knox, whom Annunziata takes in as a homœopathic dose, 'È molto curioso questo cognome,

precisamente come la medicina — *nux* (tale quale).' She (Lady Juliana) had just been presented to the Pope, just before his illness, and was much touched, when at the close of the reception of indiscriminately Catholics and Protestants, he prayed a simple prayer in French and gave them all his benediction, ending in a sad humble voice, '*Priez pour le pape.*'

It *was* touching — was it not? Poor old man! When you feel the human flesh through the ecclesiastical robe, you get into sympathy with him at once.

Miss Sewell will come and see me again, she promised, and then I shall talk with her more. I couldn't get at her through the people yesterday. She is very nice, gentle-looking, cheerful, respectable sort of — single-womanish person (decidedly single) of the olden type; very small, slim, quiet, with the nearest approach to a poky bonnet possible in this sinful generation. I, in my confusion, did not glance at her petticoats, but, judging *a priori*, I should predicate a natural incompatibility with crinoline. But really I liked her, liked her. There were gentleness, humility and conscience — three great gifts. Of course we can touch only on remote points; but I hope (for my own sake) we may touch on these, and another day I mean to try. She said one thing which I liked. Speaking of convents, she 'considered that women must deteriorate by any separation from men.' Now that's not only true, but it is not on the surface of things as seen from her standpoint.

I had a visit a day ago from M. Carl Grün, a Prussian, with a letter of introduction from Dall' Ongaro. I feel a real regard and liking for Dall' Ongaro, and would welcome any friend of his. No — my Isa. I would prefer him as my translator to any 'young lady of twenty.' Heavens, never whisper it to the Marchesa, but I confide to you that my blood ran cold at that thought. I know what poets of

twenty must in all probability be — Dall' Ongaro *is* a poet, and has a remarkable command of language.

I have tried my hand at turning into literal Italian prose (only marking the lines) a lyric on Rome sent lately to America; and I may show it to you one of these days.

Now I must send off this. In tender love.

Your Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome,] 126 Via Felice : March 20, [1861].

. . . Let me answer your questions concerning *Non Pio V.E.* Se non vero, ben trovato. Very happy, and I hope true. Probably enough it may be true, though I never heard it but from you. There was a banner with 'Viva Pio IX.' on one side, and 'Viva V.E. re d' Italia' on the other — that's true. And various devices we have had, miraculous rains of revolutionary placards among the rest. The French have taken to 'protect' our demonstrations here, half by way of keeping them under, perhaps — although the sympathy between the people and the troops (Gorgon apart) has been always undeniable. You know there was to be a gigantic demonstration to meet the declaration in the North. It was fixed to spread itself over three days. The French politely begged the 'papalini' to keep out of sight, and then they marched with the Roman demonstration for two days — twenty thousand Romans gathered together, I hear from those who were there, the greatest order observed — tricolors insinuated into the costume of all the women. After a certain time, French officer turns round and addresses the populace 'Gioventù Romana, basta cosi. Adesso bisogna andare à casa, poichè mi farebbe grandissimo dispiacere d' aprire ad alcuno la strada delle carceri.' The last words said smiling — as words to the wise. 'Grazie, grazie, grazie' were replied on all sides, and the people dispersed in the best humour possible. Yesterday (San Giuseppe) we were

to have had it repeated, but it rained hard, which was fortunate, perhaps; and I hear something of cannons being placed in evidence, and of Gorgon saying 'de haute voix' that he couldn't allow it to go on. But everybody understands Gorgon. He has certainly, up to a point, papal sympathies, and is as tender as he dares be to the Holy Father, and the irritation and wrath of the priestly party is naturally great. On the other hand, the whole body of French troops and their officers are as much vexed by Gorgon as Gorgon can vex me, and there's fraternisation with the Romans to an extraordinary degree.

Penini came home three days ago in a state of ecstasy. 'No — he never had been so happy in all his life. Oh mama, I *am* so happy!' What had happened, I asked. Why, Pen, being on the Pincio, had fallen on the French troops, had pushed through, and heard 'l'ordre du jour' read, had made friends with 'ever so many captains,' had marched in the ranks round the Pincio and into the *caserne*, had talked a great deal about Chopin, Stephen Heller, &c., with musical officers, and most about politics, and had been good-naturedly brought back to our door because he was 'too little to come alone through the crowd.' What had they not told him? Such things about Italy. 'They hoped,' said Pen, 'that *I would not think* they were like the Papalini. No indeed. They hoped I knew the French were different quite; and that, though they protected the Holy Father, they certainly didn't mean to fight for him. What *they* wanted was V.E. King of Italy. *Napoleon veut l'Italie libre.* I was to *understand that, and remember it.*' The attention, and the desire to conciliate Pen's good opinion, had perfectly turned the child's head. It will be 'dearest Napoleon' more than ever. Of course, he had invited the officers to 'come in and see mama,' only they were too discreet for this.

Pantaleone is exiled — ordered to go in eight days, three of which are passed. He is still in hopes of gaining more time, but the Pope is said to be resolutely set against him.

I am very sorry, not surprised. He told Robert yesterday, that nothing can be surer than that Napoleon has been throughout a true friend to Italy. Which is a good deal for a man to admit who began with all the irritation against Napoleon of a Roman of 1849. Even after the war, through Villafranca, the bad feeling returned, and as he lives so much among the English, it was only natural that he should receive certain influences. He is with Odo Russell (who calls him Pant) nearly every day, and Mr. Cartwright is very intimate with him besides. But P. is above all things Italian, and the Italian of the most *incisive* intellect I ever talked with. He praises Lord John.

To Miss Browning

[Rome,] [end of March] 1861 [postmark].

We take ourselves to be dismally aggrieved, ever dearest Sarianna, by your criticisms on our photographs. After deep reflection I can't help feeling sure (against Robert's impression) that he sent you — not the right one, but one which has undeniably a certain 'grin.' I prevail with him to let you have the *two-third likeness* this time, in order to decide the point. If you keep your opinion, why then all artistic Rome is against you without exception. Nobody likes the sepia-coloured thing of last year in comparison. Every album in Rome gives up its dead and insists on the new likeness — not only is it considered more like, but so infinitely superior in expression and poetical *convenance*, that it *ought* to be more like. So everybody thinks. With regard to the head, I am of opinion that the head is beautiful, and the eyes singularly full of expression for photographed eyes, but there may be more difference of opinion about the head. The *two-third view* you certainly can't have seen. Why, we had even resolved (as we couldn't hope to grow younger) to stand or fall with posterity by this production. 'Ecco!'

As to age — no! it's cruel of you to talk so. Robert's beard was tolerably white when he was in Paris last, and, in fact, his moustache is less so than the rest, therefore there can't be, and isn't in this respect, so rapid a 'decline and fall' in his appearance. The clipping of the side whiskers, which are very grey, is an advantage, and as to the hair, it is by no means cut short. 'Like an *épicier*?' No indeed. The *épicier* is bushy and curly about the ears (see an example in 'Galignani'), and moreover will keep the colour of the curl 'if he dyes for it' — an extremity to which Robert and I will never be driven — having too much the fear of attentive friends and affectionate biographers before our eyes — as suggested by poor Balzac's. But Robert is looking remarkably well and young — in spite of all lunar lights in his hair. Though my hair keeps darker (with a certain sprinkle however, underneath which forces its way outwards, I would willingly change on the whole with him, if he were not my own Robert. He is not thin or worn, as I am — no indeed — and the women adore him everywhere far too much for decency. In my own opinion he is infinitely handsomer and more attractive than when I saw him first, sixteen years ago — which does not mean as much as you may suppose, that I myself am superannuated and wholly anile, and incompetent therefore for judgment. No, indeed, I believe people in general would think the same exactly. And as to the modelling — well, I told you that I grudged a little the time from his own particular art — and that is true. But it does not do to dishearten him about his modelling. He has given a great deal of time to anatomy with reference to the expression of form, and the clay is only the new medium which takes the place of drawing. Also, Robert is peculiar in his ways of work as a poet. I have struggled a little with him on this point — for I don't think him right — that is to say, it wouldn't be right for me — and I heard the other day that it wouldn't be right for Tennyson. Tennyson is a regular worker, shuts himself

up daily for so many hours. And we are generally so made that a regular hour is good, even for so uncertain an influence as mesmerism. But Robert waits for an inclination — works by fits and starts — he can't do otherwise he says.[1] Then reading hurts him. As long as I have known him he has not been able to read long at a time — he can do it now better than in the beginning of time. The consequence of which is that he wants occupation and that an active occupation is salvation to him with his irritable nerves, saves him from ruminating bitter cud, and from the process which I call beating his dear head against the wall till it is bruised, simply because he sees a fly there, magnified by his own two eyes almost indefinitely into some Saurian monster. He has an enormous superfluity of vital energy, and if it isn't employed, it strikes its fangs into him. He gets out of spirits as he was at Havre. Nobody understands exactly why — except me who am in the inside of him and hear him breathe. For the peculiarity of our relation is, that even when he's displeased with me, he thinks aloud with me and can't stop himself. And I know ultimately that whatever takes him out of a certain circle (where habits of introvision and analysis of fly-legs are morbidly exercised), is life and joy to him. I wanted his poems done this winter very much — and here was a bright room with three windows consecrated to use. But he had a room all last summer, and did nothing. Then, he worked himself out by riding for three or four hours together — there has been little poetry done since last winter, when he did much. He was not inclined to write this winter. The modelling combines body-work and soul-work, and the more tired he has been, and the more his back ached, poor fellow, the more he has exulted and been happy — '*no, nothing ever made him so happy before*' — also the better he has looked and the stouter grown. So I couldn't be much in opposition against the

[1] Mrs. Orr's *Life* shows that this was only a temporary phase. In later life, especially, he was very regular in his hours of poetical work.

sculpture — I couldn't, in fact, at all. He has the material for a volume, and will work at it this summer, he says. His power is much in advance of Strafford, which is his poorest work of all. Oh, the brain stratifies and matures creatively, even in the pauses of the pen.

At the same time his treatment in England affects him naturally — and for my part I set it down as an infamy of that public — no other word. He says he has told you some things you had not heard, and which, I acknowledge, I always try to prevent him from repeating to anyone. I wonder if he has told you besides (no, I fancy not) that an English lady of rank, *an acquaintance of ours* (observe that!) asked, the other day, the American Minister whether 'Robert was not an American.' The Minister answered 'Is it possible that *you* ask me *this?* Why, there is not so poor a village in the United States where they would not tell you that Robert Browning was an Englishman, and that they were very sorry he was not an American.' Very pretty of the American Minister — was it not? — and literally true besides.

I have been meditating, Sarianna, dear, whether we might not make our summer out at Fontainebleau in the picturesque part of the forest. It would be quiet, and not very dear. And we might dine together and take hands as at Havre — for we will all insist on Robert's doing the hospitality. I confess to shrinking a good deal about the noise of Paris — we might try Paris later. What do you say? The sea is so very far — it is such a journey — it looks so to me just now. And the south of France is very hot — as hot as Italy — besides making you pay greatly 'for your whistle.' Switzerland would increase both expenses and journey for everybody. Fontainebleau is said to be delicious in the summer, and if you don't mind losing your sea bathing, it might answer. Arabel wants me to go to England, but as *I did not last year* my heart and nerves revolt from it now. Besides, we belong to the nonno and you this summer.

Arabel can and, I dare say, will join us. And Milsand? You say 'once in three years.' Not quite *so*, I think. In any case, it has been far worse with some of mine. All the days of the three times of meeting in fourteen years, can only be multiplied together into *three weeks;* and this after a life of close union! Also, it was not *her* fault — she had not pecuniary means. I am bitter against myself for not having gone to England for a week or two in the Havre year. I could have done it, Robert would have let me. But now, no more. It was the war the year before last, and my unsteadiness of health last year, which kept us from our usual visit to you. This time we shall come.

Only we shall avoid the Alps, coming and going, out of prudence. Then, for next winter, we return to Rome. . . .

Why do you believe all the small gossip set in movement by the Emperor's enemies, in Paris, against his friends, as in foreign countries against himself? It's a league of lies against him and his. 'Intriguing lacqueys.' That's a sweeping phrase for all persons of distinction in France, except members of the Opposition. That men like De Morny and Waleski may speculate unduly I don't doubt, but even the 'Times' says now that these things have been probably exaggerated. I have heard great good of both these men. As to Prince Napoleon, he has spoken like a man and a prince. We are at his feet here in Italy. Tell our dear friend Milsand that I read the seventeen columns of the speech in the 'Moniteur.' Robert said 'magnificent.' I had tears in my eyes. There may have been fault in the P.'s private life — and may be still. Where is a clean man? But for the rest, he has done and spoken worthily — and what is better, we have reason to believe here that the Emperor sympathises with him wholly. Odo Russell knows the Prince — says that he is 'pétillant d'esprit' and has great weight with the Emperor.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Martin

[Rome,] 126 Via Felice: [April 1861].

[My] very dear friends, how am I to thank [you] both? I receive the photograph with a heart running over. It is perfect. Never could a likeness be more satisfactory. It is himself. Form, expression, the whole man and soul, on which years cannot leave the least dint of a tooth. The youthfulness is extraordinary. We are all crying out against our 'black lines' (laying them all to the sun of course!) and even pretty women of our acquaintance in Rome come out with some twenty years additional on their heads, to their great dissatisfaction. But my dear Mr. Martin is my dear Mr. Martin still, unblacked, unchanged, as when I knew him in the sun long ago, when suns were content to make funny places, instead of drawing pictures! How good of dearest Mrs. Martin (it was she, I think!) to send this to me! I wish she (or he) had sent me hers besides. (How grasping some of us are!)

Then she sent me a short time since a book for my Peni, which he seized on with blazing eyes and an exclamation, 'Oh, what fun!' A work by his great author, Mayne Reid, who outshines all other authors, unless it's Robinson Crusoe, who, of course, wrote his own life. It was so very very good of you. Robert had repeatedly tried in Rome to buy a new volume of Mayne Reid for the child, and never could get one. Our drawback in Rome relates to books. We subscribe to a French library (not good) and snatch at accidental 'waifs,' and then the newspapers (which I intrigue about, and get smuggled through the courteous hands of French generals) are absorbing enough.

I had a letter from George yesterday with good news of dearest Mrs. Martin. May it be true. But I can't understand whether you have spent this year in Devonshire or Worcestershire, or where. The thick gloom of it is over

now, yet I find myself full of regrets. It's so hard to have to get out into the workday world, daylight, open air and all, and there's a duty on me to go to France, that Robert may see his father. You would pity me if you could see how I dread it. Arabel will meet me, and spend at least the summer with us, probably in the neighbourhood of Paris, and after just the first, we — even I — may be the happier. Don't tell anyone that I feel so. I should like to go into a cave for the year. Not that I haven't taken to work again, and to my old interests in politics. One doesn't quite rot in one's selfishness, after all. In fact, I think of myself as little as possible; it's the only way to bear life, to throw oneself out of the personal.

And my Italy goes on well in spite of some Neapolitan troubles, which are exaggerated, I can certify to you. Rome, according to my information as well as my instincts, approaches the crisis we desire. In respect to Venetia, we may (perhaps must) have a struggle for it, which might have been unnecessary if England had frankly accepted co-action with France, instead of doing a little liberalism and a great deal of suspicion on her own account. As it is, there's an impression in Europe that considerations about the East (to say nothing of the Ionian Islands) will be stronger than Vattel, and forbid our throwing over our 'natural ally' for the sake of our 'natural enemy.'

I am sure you must have been anxious lately on account of America. There seems to be a good deal of weakness, even on the part of Lincoln, who, if he had not the means of defending Fort Sumter and maintaining the Union, should not have spoken as he did. Not that it may not be as well to let the Southern States secede. Perhaps better so. What I feared most was that the North would compromise; and I fear still that they are not heroically strong on their legs on the *moral question*. I fear it much. If they can but hold up it will be noble.

We remain here (where we have had the mildest of

winters) till somewhat late in May, when we go to Florence for a week or two on our way to Paris.

You see my Emperor is 'crowning the edifice';[1] it is the beginning. Sir John Bowring says that the more liberty he can give, the better he will like it. *He told Sir John so.*

Is it right and loyal meanwhile of Guizot and his party to oppose the empire by upholding the enemies of Italy? I ask you. Such things I hear from Paris! Guizot corrected Keller's speech with his own hand.

May God bless you. Pen's love and gratitude. If Robert was here he would be named. Love me and think of me a little.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Miss Browning

[Rome]: May 11, 1861 (postmark).

Your account of the dearest nonno was very pleasant on the whole, only, of course, you will be very careful with him. And then, dearest Sarianna, you yourself have not been well. The grippe seems to have been bitter against you. This is the time of year when it generally rages, and even Pen has had a small cough, which makes me austere about hours. In fact, the weather in the north has reverberated here, and we have paid for our mild winter by a considerable lingering of cold wind, from snow on the mountains, they say. As for me, it's much to my disadvantage in getting air and strength. I hope you are quite well again, as is Pen, and that the loved nonno is as strong as he ever

[1] It is curious that these are the very words which (as a translation from the Greek) Robert Browning used ten years later as the motto of his study of Louis Napoleon in 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau'; but the 'crowning' was of a very different kind then.

> 'Attempting one more labour, in a trice,
> Alack, *with ills I crowned the edifice.*'

was. Do you get good wine for him? The vintages are said to have suffered (which grieves me for poor dear Milsand) from the frost. We hear of travellers in snow-storms through England, where the cold has been great, and that in Paris, too, there has been snow. I do hope the opening summer will not copy the last.

Dearest Sarianna, try to find out if Fontainebleau is damp, because I was assured the other day that it was, besides being subject to intense heats. Also, will you see if there is a completed railroad to Trouville? Robert denies that sea-air ever disagrees with him (sea-*bathing* does), and it may be good for you and for Pen, to say nothing of Arabel, who is coming in the course of the summer. The objection is the journey, but if the railroad is there, it would not prolong the journey (in relation to Fontainebleau) more than two or three hours, if so much, would it? We ought to inquire a little beforehand. We shall get to you as early as we can. The weather is against us everywhere. We shall cut Florence quite short. By the way, we have the satisfaction of seeing a precipitation of the Tuscan funds down, down, which only makes Robert wish for more power of 'buying in,' causing the eyes of a Florentine Frescobaldi to open in wonder at so much audacity. But Robert, generally so timid in such things, has caught a flush of my rashness, and is alarmed by neither sinking funds nor rising loans. We have a strong faith in Italy — *Italia fatta* — particularly since that grand child, Garibaldi, has turned good again. The troubles in the Neapolitan States are exaggerated, are perilous even so, and I dare say Milsand thinks we are all going to pieces, but *we shall not;* there are great men here, and there will be a great nation presently. An Australian Englishman, very acute, and free from the political faults (as I see them) of England, did all he could to prepare me for failure in Italy, 'to save my heart from breaking,' as he said. And we have had drawbacks since then, yet my hope remains as strong.

The Duchesse de Grammont (French Embassy) sent us a card for Penini — 'matinée d'enfants' — and he went, and was rather proud of being received under a full-length portrait of Napoleon, who is as dear as ever to him. It was a very splendid affair, quite royal. Pen wore a crimson velvet blouse, and was presented to various small Italian princes, Colonnas, Dorias, Piombinos, and had the honor of talking ponies and lessons and playing leap-frog with them. The ambassador's own boy, the little Grammont, has a pony 'tale quale' like Pen's, only superannuated rather, which gives us the advantage. . . .

I wonder if he will confide to you his tender admiration for the young queen of Naples, whom, between you and me, he pursues, and receives in return ever so many smiles from that sad lovely face. When charged with a love affair, Pen answered gravely, that he 'did feel a kind of *interest*.' He told us that two days since she stood up in her carriage three times to smile at him. Something, it may be for the pony's sake; but also, Pen confessed, to an impression that his new jacket attracted! Fancy little Pen! Robert says she is very pretty, and for Pen (who makes it a point of conscience to consider the whole 'razza' of Bourbons and Papalini as 'questi infami *birboni*') to be so drawn, there must be a charm. After all, poor little creature, she acted heroically from her point of sight, and if the king had minded her, he would have made liberal concessions *in time* perhaps. The wretched queen-mother and herself were at daggers drawn from the beginning.

I hear that Jessie Mario and her husband have been taken up at Ferrara. They were *only* going to begin the war with Austria on their own account. Mazzini deserves what I should be sorry to inflict. He is a man without conscience. And that's no reason why Jessie and her party should use him for *theirs*. Mario is only the husband of his wife.

Robert has brought me home a most perfect copy of a

small torso of Venus — from the Greek — in the clay. It is wonderfully done, say the learned. He says 'all his happiness lies in clay now'; *that* was his speech to me this morning. *Not* a compliment, but said so sincerely and fervently, that I could not but sympathise and wish him a life-load of clay to riot in. It's the mixture of physical and intellectual effort which makes the attraction, I imagine. Certainly he is very well and very gay.

I am happy to see that the 'North British Quarterly' has an article on him. That gives hope for England. Thackeray has turned me out of the 'Cornhill' for indecency, but did it so prettily and kindly that I, who am forgiving, sent him another poem. He says that plain words permitted on Sundays must not be spoken on Mondays in England, and also that his 'Magazine is for babes and sucklings.' (I thought it was for the volunteers.)

May God bless you, dearest Sarianna and nonno. Pen's love.

The incident alluded to in the last paragraph deserves fuller mention, for the credit it does to both parties concerned in it. The letters that passed between Thackeray and Mrs. Browning on the subject have been given by Mrs. Richmond Ritchie in the 'Cornhill Magazine' for July 1896, from which I am allowed to quote them. Mrs. Browning, in reply to a request from Thackeray for contributions to the then newly established 'Cornhill,' had sent him, among other poems, 'Lord Walter's Wife,'[1] of which, though the moral is unimpeachable, the subject is not absolutely *virginibus puerisque*. The editor, in this difficulty, wrote the following admirable letter: —

[1] *Poetical Works*, iv. 252.

W. M. Thackeray to Mrs. Browning

36 Onslow Square: April 2, 1861.

My dear, kind Mrs. Browning, — Has Browning ever had an aching tooth which must come out (I don't say *Mrs.* Browning, for women are much more courageous) — a tooth which must come out, and which he has kept for months and months away from the dentist? I have had such a tooth a long time, and have sate down in this chair, and never had the courage to undergo the pull.

This tooth is an allegory (I mean *this* one). It's your poem that you sent me months ago, and who am I to refuse the poems of Elizabeth Browning and set myself up as a judge over her? I can't tell you how often I have been going to write and have failed. You see that our Magazine is written not only for men and women but for boys, girls, infants, sucklings almost, and one of the best wives, mothers, women in the world writes some verses which I feel certain would be objected to by many of our readers. Not that the writer is not pure, and the moral most pure, chaste, and right, but there are things *my* squeamish public will not hear on Monday, though on Sundays they listen to them without scruple. In your poem, you know, there is an account of unlawful passion, felt by a man for a woman, and though you write pure doctrine, and real modesty, and pure ethics, I am sure our readers would make an outcry, and so I have not published this poem.

To have to say no to my betters is one of the hardest duties I have, but I'm sure we must not publish your verses, and I go down on my knees before cutting my victim's head off, and say, 'Madam, you know how I respect and regard you, Browning's wife and Penini's mother; and for what I am going to do I most humbly ask your pardon.'

My girls send their very best regards and remembrances, and I am, dear Mrs. Browning, Always yours,

W. M. THACKERAY.

Mrs. Browning's answer follows.

To W. M. Thackeray

Rome, 126 Via Felice: April 21, [1861].

Dear Mr. Thackeray, — Pray consider the famous 'tooth' (a wise tooth !) as extracted under chloroform, and no pain suffered by anybody.

To prove that I am not sulky, I send another contribution, which may prove too much, perhaps — and, if you think so, dispose of the supererogatory virtue by burning the manuscript, as I am sure I may rely on your having done with the last.

I confess it, dear Mr. Thackeray, never was anyone turned out of a room for indecent behaviour in a more gracious and conciliatory manner ! Also, I confess that from your 'Cornhill' standpoint (paterfamilias looking on) you are probably right ten times over. From mine, however, I may not be wrong, and I appeal to you as the deep man you are, whether it is not the higher mood, which on Sunday bears with the 'plain word,' so offensive on Monday, during the cheating across the counter? I am not a 'fast woman.' I don't like coarse subjects, or the coarse treatment of any subject. But I am deeply convinced that the corruption of our society requires not shut doors and windows, but light and air: and that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to *ignore* vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere. Has paterfamilias, with his Oriental traditions and veiled female faces, very successfully dealt with a certain class of evil? What if materfamilias, with her quick sure instincts and honest innocent eyes, do more towards their expulsion by simply looking at them and calling them by their names? See what insolence you put me up to by your kind way of naming my dignities — 'Browning's wife and Penini's mother.'

And I, being vain (turn some people out of a room and you don't humble them properly), retort with — 'materfamilias !'

Our friend Mr. Story has just finished a really grand statue of the 'African Sybil.' It will place him very high.

Where are you all, Annie, Minnie? — Why don't you come and see us in Rome?

My husband bids me give you his kind regards, and I shall send Pen's love with mine to your dear girls.

Most truly yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

We go to Florence in the latter part of May.

Before leaving Florence, however, the following letter was written to Mr. Thackeray, which I quote from the same article by Mrs. Ritchie. The poem alluded to must, however, be 'The North and the South,'[1] Mrs. Browning's last poem, written with reference to Hans Andersen's visit to Rome; not 'A Musical Instrument,' as Mrs. Ritchie suggests, which had been written some time previously.

To W. M. Thackeray

Rome, 126 Via Felice: [May 21, 1861].

Dear Mr. Thackeray, — I hope you received my note and last poem. I hope still more earnestly that you won't think I am putting my spite against your chastening hand into a presumptuous and troublesome fluency.

But Hans Christian Andersen is here, charming us all, and not least the children. So I wrote these verses — not for 'Cornhill' this month, of course — though I send them now that they may lie over at your service (if you are so pleased) for some other month of the summer.

We go to Florence on the first of June, and lo! here is the twenty-first of May.

With love to dear Annie and Minny,

I remain, most truly yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

[1] *Poetical Works*, v. 6.

To Miss I. Blagden

Rome: Saturday, [about May 1861].

Ever dearest Isa, — Now that Robert's letter is gone, I am able for shame to write. His waiting did not *mean* a slackness of kindness, but a tightness of entanglement in other things; and then absolutely he has got to the point of doing without reading. Nothing but clay does he care for, poor lost soul. But you will see, I hope, from what he has written (to judge by what he speaks), that he is not so lost as to be untouched by Agnes.[1] . . .

I send you, dear, two more translations for Dall' Ongaro. You will have given him my former message. I began that letter to him, and was interrupted; and then, considering the shortness of our time here, would not begin another. You will have explained, and will make him thoroughly understand, that in sending him a verbal and literal translation I never thought of exacting such a thing from *him*, but simply of letting him have the advantage of seeing the *raw, naked poetry as it stands*. In fact, my translation is scarcely Italian, I know very well. I mean it for English rather. Conventional and idiomatical Italian forms have been expressly avoided. I have used the Italian as a net to catch the English in for the use of an Italian poet! Let him understand.

We shall be soon in our Florence now. I am rather stronger, but so weak still that my eyes dazzle to think of it. Povera me!

Tell Dall' Ongaro that his friend M. Carl Grün had enough of me in one visit. He never came again, though I prayed him to come. I have not been equal to receiving in the evening, and perhaps he expected an invitation. I go to bed at eight on most nights. I'm the rag of a Ba. Yet I *am* stronger, and look much so, it seems to me. Mr. Story

[1] 'Agnes Tremorne,' Miss Blagden's novel.

is *doing* Robert's bust, which is likely to be a success.[1] Hatty brought us a most charming design for a fountain for Lady Marion Alford. The imagination is unfolding its wings in Hatty. She is quite of a mind to spend the summer with you at Florence or elsewhere. The Storys talk of Switzerland. . . .

Andersen (the Dane) came to see me yesterday — kissed my hand, and seemed in a general *verve* for embracing. He is very earnest, very simple, very childlike. I like him. Pen says of him, 'He is not really pretty. He is rather like his own ugly duck, but his mind has *developed* into a swan.'

That wasn't bad of Pen, was it? He gets on with his Latin too. And, Isa, he has fastened a half-franc to his button-hole, for the sake of the beloved image, and no power on earth can persuade him out of being so ridiculous. I was base enough to say that it wouldn't please the Queen of Spain! And he responded, he 'chose her to know that he *did* love Napoleon'!

Isa, I send these two last poems that Dall' Ongaro may be aware of my sympathy's comprehending more sides than one of Italian experience.

We have taken no apartment yet!!!

To Miss Browning

Florence: June 7, 1861 [postmark].

I can't let Robert's disagreeable letter go alone, dearest Sarianna, though my word will be as heavy as a stone at the bottom of it. I am deeply sorry you should have had the vain hope of seeing Robert and Pen. As for me, I know my place; I am only good for a drag chain. But, dear, don't fancy it has been the fault of my *will*. In fact, I said almost too much at Rome to Robert, till he fancied I had

[1] After Mrs. Browning's death, Mr. Story made a companion bust of her, and both busts were subsequently executed in marble on the commission of Mr. George Barrett, who presented them to Mr. R. Barrett Browning, in whose possession they have since remained.

set my selfwill on tossing myself up as a halfpenny, and coming down on the wrong side. Now, in fact, it was not at all (nearly) for Arabel that I wished to go, only I did really wish and do my best to go. He, on the other hand, before we left Rome, had made up his mind (helped by a stray physician of mine, whom he met in the street) that it would be a great risk to carry me north. He (Robert) always a little exaggerates the difficulties of travelling, and there's no denying that I have less strength than is usual to me even at the present time. I touched the line of vexing him, with my resistance to the decision, but he is so convinced that repose is necessary for me, and that the lions in the path will be all asleep by this time next year, that I yielded. Certainly he has a right to command me away from giving him unnecessary anxieties. What does vex me is that the dearest nonno should not see his Peni this year, and that you, dear, should be disappointed, *on my account again*. That's hard on us all. We came home into a cloud here. I can scarcely command voice or hand to name *Cavour*.[1] That great soul, which meditated and made Italy, has gone to the Diviner country. If tears or blood could have saved him to us, he should have had mine. I feel yet as if I could scarcely comprehend the greatness of the vacancy. A hundred Garibaldis for such a man. There is a hope that certain solutions had been prepared between him and the Emperor, and that events will slide into their grooves. May God save Italy. Dear M. Milsand had pleased me so by his appreciation, but there *are* great difficulties. The French press, tell him, has, on the whole, done great service, except that part of it under the influence of the ultra-montane and dynastic opposition parties. And as to exaggerated statements, it is hard, even here, to get at the truth (with regard to the state of the south), and many Italian liberals have had hours of anxiety and even of despondency. English friends of ours, very candid and

[1] Cavour died on June 6, 1861.

liberal, have gone to Naples full of hope, and returned hoping nothing — yet they are wrong, unless this bitter loss makes them right —

Your loving Ba —

Robert tears me away ——

With this letter the correspondence of Mrs. Browning, so far, at least, as it is extant or accessible, comes to an end. The journey to Paris had been abandoned, but it does not appear that there was any cause to apprehend that her life could now be reckoned only by days. Yet so it was. For the past three years, it is evident, her strength had been giving way. Attacks of physical illness weakened her, without being followed by any adequate rally; but more than all, the continuous stress and strain of mental anxiety wore her strength away. The war of 1859, the liberation of Sicily and Naples, the intense irritation of feeling in connection with English opinion of Louis Napoleon and his policy, the continual ebb and flow of rumours concerning Venetia and the Papal States, the illness and death of her sister Henrietta — all these sources of anxiety told terribly on her sensitive, emotional mind, and thereby on her enfeebled body. The fragility of her appearance had always struck strangers. So far back as 1851, Bayard Taylor remarked that 'her frame seemed to be altogether disproportionate to her soul.' Her 'fiery soul' did, indeed, with a far more literal truth than can often be the case, fret her 'puny body to decay, and o'er-informed its tenement of clay.' Her last illness — or, it may more truly be said, the last phase of that illness which had been present with her for years — was neither long nor severe; but she had no more strength left to resist it. Shortly after her return to Casa Guidi another bronchial attack developed itself, to all appearance just like many others that she had had before; but this time there was no recovery.

Of the last scene no other account need be asked or

wished for than that given by Mr. Browning himself in a letter to Miss Haworth, dated July 20, 1861.[1]

My dear Friend,—I well know you feel, as you say, for her once and for me now. Isa Blagden, perfect in all kindness to me, will have told you something, perhaps, and one day I shall see you and be able to tell you myself as much as I can. The main comfort is that she suffered very little pain, none beside that ordinarily attending the simple attacks of cold and cough she was subject to, had no presentiment of the result whatever, and was consequently spared the misery of knowing she was about to leave us: she was smilingly assuring me that she was 'better,' 'quite comfortable, if I would but come to bed,' to within a few minutes of the last. I think I foreboded evil at Rome, certainly from the beginning of the week's illness, but when I reasoned about it, there was no justifying fear. She said on the last evening 'It is merely the old attack, not so severe a one as that of two years ago; there is no doubt I shall soon recover,' and we talked over plans for the summer and next year. I sent the servants away and her maid to bed, so little reason for disquietude did there seem. Through the night she slept heavily and brokenly—that was the bad sign; but then she would sit up, take her medicine, say unrepeatable things to me, and sleep again. At four o'clock there were symptoms that alarmed me; I called the maid and sent for the doctor. She smiled as I proposed to bathe her feet, 'Well, you *are* determined to make an exaggerated case of it!' Then came what my heart will keep till I see her again and longer—the most perfect expression of her love to me within my whole knowledge of her. Always smilingly, happily, and with a face like a girl's, and in a few minutes she died in my arms, her head on my cheek. These incidents so sustain me that I tell them to her beloved ones as their right: there was no lingering, nor acute pain, nor consciousness of separation,

[1] Mrs. Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, p. 249.

but God took her to Himself as you would lift a sleeping child from a dark uneasy bed into your arms and the light. Thank God! Annunziata thought, by her earnest ways with me, happy and smiling as they were, that she must have been aware of our parting's approach, but she was quite conscious, had words at command, and yet did not even speak of Peni, who was in the next room. The last word was, when I asked, 'How do you feel?' 'Beautiful.' . . .

So ended on earth the most perfect example of wedded happiness in the history of literature — perfect in the inner life and perfect in its poetical expression. It was on June 29, 1861, that Mrs. Browning died. She was buried at Florence, where her body rests in a sarcophagus designed by her friend and her husband's friend, Frederic Leighton, the future President of the Royal Academy. At a later date, when her husband was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, her remains might have been transferred to England, to lie with his among the great company of English poets in which they had earned their places. But it was thought better, on the whole, to leave them undisturbed in the land and in the city which she had loved so well, and which had been her home so long. In life and in death she had been made welcome in Florence. The Italians, as her husband said, seemed to have understood her by an instinct; and upon the walls of Casa Guidi is a marble slab, placed there by the municipality of Florence, and bearing an inscription from the pen of the Italian poet, Tommaseo: —

QUI SCRISSE E MORÌ
ELISABETTA BARRETT BROWNING
CHE IN CUORE DI DONNA CONCILIAVA
SCIENZA DI DOTTO E SPIRITO DI POETA
E FECE DEL SUO VERSO AUREO ANELLO
FRA ITALIA E INGHILTERRA.
PONE QUESTA LAPIDE
FIRENZE GRATA
1861.

It is with words adapted from this memorial that her husband, seven years later, closed his own great poem, praying that the 'ring,' to which he likens it, might but—

> 'Lie outside thine, Lyric Love,
> Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet praised),
> Linking our England to his Italy.'

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